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Villanova-Solaro

A STORY OF THE VAUDOIS.

BY

MISS L. BATES.

PHILADELPHIA:

American Baptist Publication Society,

1420 Chestnut Street.

VILLANOVA-SOLARO.

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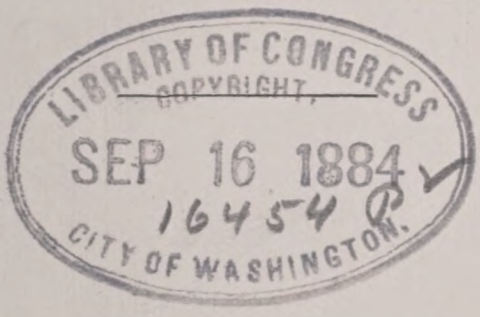

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VILLANOVA-SOLARO.

INTRODUCTION.

THE VAUDOIS.

THE great events of the Reformation, the report of which was fraught with such dismal consequences in Calabria and in Provence, could not remain without influences in the Vaudois valleys, from which the evangelical churches of these countries had originated in former times.

The first Christian Churches founded by the apostles were religious societies, united to one another by the bonds of faith and charity; but independent in their organization. Hence the particular churches could remain long united to the universal church, without renouncing that liberty of conscience which belonged to them in their individual capacity. The Vaudois Church is an instance in point; and the long strife which the Papal Church had to maintain, in order to reduce the greater part of other churches under its au-

thority, affords a more general, but a certain, proof that they were not from the first subject to it. The word church then signified no more than a simple assembly, and the distinctive characteristic of the Christian assemblies was, that they were churches of brethren.

Roman Catholicism changed the meaning of these words; it desired to have dominion over the world, and availed itself for this purpose of the elements of that Paganism which had recently been supreme. The invasion of the barbarians had just overthrown the Roman Empire, and Romanism was nothing else than the result of a hideous combination of corrupt Paganism, with the savage barbarism that destroyed the ancient civilization. Then was this church seen to grow up to all the height of that edifice of past times which had been cast down; and, like a building spared in a great inundation, stood alone for centuries within a level, but darkened, horizon, amid the ruins of the ancient world, gradually disappearing or undergoing change.

Its pride increasing with its strength, the Papacy now aimed at subjugating the temporal powers to the spiritual power, of which it arrogated the name to itself; and thus did it unconsciously

proclaim the superiority of mind over matter: even while it had, so to speak, wedded itself to matter in its wholly material worship. The human mind awoke, and protested against a worship so unworthy of itself; the dawn of restored letters cast its first rays upon the Bible, which also gave forth its protest; all generous hearts gathered around it with the ardor of life, to destroy in its name the carnal forms of a monument of death; and as two chords in unison vibrate in response to one another, notwithstanding the distance which separates them, the sensation at once produced in the Vaudois Church by the Reformation gives evidence of the secret harmony which existed between them, and which alone could account for the feeling of mutual affection with which the hearts, both of the Vaudois and of the Reformers, were suddenly moved.

The Vaudois hastened to send to the Reformers two of their Barbas, George Morel and Peter Masson, the latter asking questions and receiving evangelical replies which filled them with joy. As they returned, they passed through Dijon on their way to Dauphiny. Their pious conversation revealed them to be Vaudois. This was a crime in that city, and they were punished for their temerity.

France, however, preceded Germany and Switzerland in a reforming movement, which was evidently destined either to revive or destroy the Roman Catholic Church. Nowhere had the imperious ambition of Popery been more energetically repressed than by the French nation. The Bishop of Meaux, together with the learned and unpretending instructions of a professor of the Sarbonne, had done much in winning the members of the court and the royal family to espouse the cause of the Reformation. But in France, also, a reaction displayed itself so much the more strongly, as the avowal of Bible doctrines had been made with greater reserve.

The Vaudois delegates returning from Strasburg, were arrested at Dijon in 1580. The particulars of this event have not come down to us; but the issue was, that George Morel succeeded in making his escape, with the precious packet of letters and religious instruction, which he bore to his compatriots; but, as if no other price than that of martyrdom would have been proportionate to their worth, the good Barba sealed them with his blood, dying with the calmness of a Christian who feels that he is redeemed.

Several conferences were held, to discuss the ex-

planations given by the Reformers. Finally, in September, 1532, they gathered into an Assembly to which representatives of all the Vaudois parishes repaired; not only from the valleys, but also from Calabria, Saluzzo, Provence, and Dauphiny. This solemn gathering was held in the open air at the hamlet of Chanforans, in presence of all the people. It met on one of those shady pieces of level ground situated half way up the mountains, shut in, like an arena for giants, by the distant slopes of the Pra-del Tor, then crowned with sparkling snows.

Already a rapid change of opinions and relations had taken place all around the Vaudois valleys The seigneurs of Miradol, Rivenoble, and Solaro, appeared at the council of faith and liberty. Farel came mounted on a white horse, with that noble demeanor which belongs to persons of royal birth. Saulnier accompanied him, and all thronged around the steps of these illustrious, but unassuming men, who came to seal the compact of brotherhood between the successors of the primitive church and the promoters of a new era of evangelization.

"The Reformers," says one who was present at the meeting, "were greatly rejoiced to see that people, who had ever proved faithful, that Israel

of the Alps, to whose charge God had committed for so many centuries the ark of the new covenant, thus eager in his service. And examining with interest the manuscript copies of the Old and New Testaments, which were with us correctly copied with the hand at a date beyond all memory, they marveled at that favor of heaven which a people so small in numbers had enjoyed, and rendered thanks to God that the Bible had never been taken from them. Then, also, in their great desire that the reading of it might be made profitable to a greater number of persons, they adjured all the other brethren, for the glory of God and the good of Christians, to take measures for circulating it, showing how necessary it was that a general translation should be made of it into French, carefully compared with the original texts, and of which large numbers should be printed." All the Vaudois applauded the design, and, according to this author, joyfully agreed to the work proposed; so that it is to the existence of these ancient Vaudois manuscripts, the first in which the Bible was ever presented in the vulgar tongue (being what was then called the Romance tongue), that the Christian world was indebted for the first complete translation of the Bible printed in French.

They then proceeded to the discussion of questions the most diverse; articles of faith and usage that admitted of differences, and all in such a spirit of good will and brotherly kindness as to draw them still more closely to each other. Prayer at all times opened and closed these discussions.

The Bible of which mention has been made was printed in Gothic characters, in two columns, with remarkable neatness, and cost the Vaudois one thousand five hundred golden crowns; and it would be surprising that a people so few in number should be able to make such very considerable sacrifice, if we did not know that faith makes the greatest works possible, and that the feeblest can do all things when Christ strengthens them.

This undertaking originated through the influence of Farel, himself a Frenchman, and was also prosecuted with a special regard to the Reformed Church of France. The Vaudois who address that church as a sister, say to her in the preface, recalling the refuge which the former disciples had sought among them: "The poor people who make you this present were driven forth and banished from your company more than three centuries ago; they are the true people of patience, who, in faith, and hope, and charity, have silently

vanquished all the assaults and efforts which their enemies have been able to make against them."

The churches of France replied by one of their synods: "They are the people of joyous affection and of constant courage; their name is the little flock; their kingdom is not of this world; their motto is piety and contentment; they are a church which has endured conflicts and is embrowned and sun-scorched without, but fair and of goodly appearance within; whose footsteps the greater part amongst us have failed to follow; for religious zeal exists only in the monuments of history, and in the ashes of our fathers, which are still warm with their ardor for the propagation of the gospel."

A year after the publication and distribution of this Bible, one of the Barbas, Martin Gonin, pastor of Angrogna, undertook to go in person to Geneva, in order to procure the religious publications necessary for his countrymen. Ten years before, Gonin had made an excursion among the Reformers, and had brought back a number of books. The worthy Barba left the valleys at the end of winter; because the roads being then more difficult and less frequented, were also less closely watched. Another Vaudois, John Girard, accompanied him to Geneva, where he intended to found a printing establish-

ment, with the especial view of providing for the wants of his own countrymen. He did establish it, and it fell to his lot afterward to print the narrative of the first persecutions undertaken against the Vaudois in the sixteenth century. As for Barba Martin Gonin, after making choice of the books which he was commissioned to procure, he set out again for the Vaudois valleys.

The Duke of Savoy was then at war with the King of France, who had just seized upon Bresse, Savoy, and great part of Piedmont. The Bernese took advantage of these circumstances to re-assert their claim to the right bank of the Leman, which the Duke of Savoy still possessed. They likewise seized upon the Pays de Vaud, and carried their invasions as far as Chablais and the Pays de Gex.

To shun these scenes of conflict, Martin Gonin was obliged take a different road from that by which he had formerly traveled; he went through France, and he traversed the Champsaur in order to reach the Gapençois, and thence to gain the Vaudois valleys of Dauphiny. He incurred the suspicion of being a spy of the Duke of Savoy, and was arrested. He was conducted to Grenoble, where he was examined by some members of the Parliament, and obliged to reply to their interrogatories; but

they, being persuaded of his innocence, commanded him to be set at liberty. The jailer, with the intention unquestionably of robbing his prisoner of any valuables which he might find about him, took upon himself to search him, under pretext of making him free of all possible suspicion. Having set about this odious proceeding, he thought that he discovered papers concealed under the lining of his dress. These were no other than the brotherly letters of Farel, Saulnier, and other ministers of Geneva, which these worthy servants of Christ had sent to their Christian brethren in the valleys, by the hand of their pastor. The jailer took possession of these writings, and to justify himself to the judges, perhaps to gain credit for his bad action, he delivered them to the provost, who commanded him to convey Gonin back to prison. Two days after, the captive was summoned to a new examination, as a person accused of Lutheranism.

"I am not a Lutheran" he said, when called upon to reply. "Luther did not die for me, but Jesus Christ only, whose name I bear."

"What is your doctrine?" was asked.

"That of the gospel."

"Do you go to mass?"

"No."

"Do you acknowledge the authority of the Pope?"

"No."

The judges were enraged at these calm replies. The Barba demanded to be allowed to prove all his beliefs from the Bible.

"We will not listen to you," answered the judges. And at once they proclaimed him a heretic, and condemned him to death.

Grenoble, however, was a city of more enlightenment than Dijon. The new light had penetrated it. The seigneurs of Bonne, Villars, Mailhet, and Bardonneuche, with other families of high descent, had already in some measure imbibed those doctrines which made them, in the contests that soon followed, strenuous defenders of the Reformation. It was feared that the evangelical language of the Vaudois Barba might excite too much sympathy, and thus it was decided that his execution should not be public. "Otherwise," they said, "his engaging manner and his fair speech will be sure to create commotion." Accordingly, it was resolved that he should be strangled at night, and his corpse should then be cast into the Seine. This was done, and the river bore away the body of the Vaudois martyr, while his soul winged its flight to meet its Lord.

CHAPTER I.

THE SEIGNEURS OF SOLARO.

THE ancient house at Caragli, that of Villanova-Solaro, was distinguished by attachment to the doctrines of the gospel; and it was under its protection that the church against which proceedings were now commenced had risen and been sheltered. The Duke of Savoy, Emmanuel Philibert, caused letters to be written to the heads of this noble family, saying that, if they desired to retain the favor of their prince, they must cease to extend their support to a heresy already too widely spread. But the seigneurs of Solaro, while they protested their devotedness to their sovereign, demanded the privilege of proving also their devotedness to their religion. A short time after this, a list of the reformed was demanded from the magistrates. In this list was immediately included nearly nine hundred persons, although many were absent, and their names did not appear there.

After this list was prepared, the Duke himself wrote to the Count of Solaro. He urged him, in

the strongest manner, to return within the pale of the Church of Rome, sternly declaring his resolution not to suffer two religions in his dominions. But the Count respectfully replied that he would render to Cesar the things which were Cesar's; but to God the things which were God's.

A few days later the Duke sent a missionary to Caragli, commanding all the inhabitants of the town to attend his preaching. The majority of the reformed refused to go. When this was known, an officer of the Council of State apprised the syndics that they must get ready a special list of the most stubborn within the space of four days; and at the same time there arrived a proclamation by the Duke, in which he exhorted all the reformed of the town to change their doctrines, threatening them with his wrath if they persisted in their heresy. The greater part of these Christians now took to flight, which left a great blank, and spread desolation over the country. The Duke perceived that he had gone too far, or rather too fast; and he hastened to bring them back, by causing letters to be written, in which he urged them to return to their homes, promising that no step against them should be taken without due notice. Hardly were they again settled in their homes when an edict

was published, by which all the Protestants of Carmagli who would not objure were ordered to leave the country within the space of six months. A year was allowed them to effect the sale of their property, by agents appointed for that purpose.

The seigneurs of Solaro, who enjoyed a credit merited alike by their enlightenment, their illustrious rank, and their virtues, repaired to the presence of their sovereign, by whom they had been previously summoned. As the families had previously been on terms of social intimacy, the Count, with a suitable retinue, set out; doubtless thinking that a personal interview would be all that was needful to settle a question that had to do alone with the heart and conscience of the individual.

As the royal party clattered out of the castle-yard, Octavia, the youngest sister of the Count, leaned over the balcony and followed her brother with eyes wet with tears. As the park gates flew open he turned his courser and lifted his plumed helmet, then waved his hand in the direction of the castle and dashed away, followed by his men.

"May God go with him and be with him," murmured Octavia, as she bowed her head.

When she raised it again, her countenance be-

trayed no emotion,—the God in whom she trusted had sent the Comforter. Taking a roll from the table, and flinging a light scarf over her head, Octavia left the balcony and, gliding down a spiral staircase that led to the garden, took her way along a shaded path to the little flower-gemmed arbor where she was accustomed to spend a quiet hour in reading from the evangelists. As she read, the beauty of the words inspired her with a new and deeper sense of their real meaning. The life of Christ upon earth, the majesty of his character, allied to the purity and goodness manifest upon every occasion; his compassion for the poor and distressed; his willingness to relieve, and his power manifest in healing the sick and in raising the dead,—drew her with loving tenderness. Gradually her hand loosened its grasp; the roll fell at her feet, while there passed in review before her the weary marches from village to village; the people coming out, bringing the blind and the sick, to be healed by his touch. The poor widow of Nain who, tottering behind the bier on which her only son was lying cold and dead, was surprised by the prayer that summoned the spirit back, and gave her boy again to her arms. Then the agony of the garden, the cross, and the cruel death. "And this

God is our God. We have his promise; he will never leave us, nor forsake us." The murmured words dispelled the vision. A sound of voices echoed along the garden paths. Her name was called. The hour she could call her own was passed.

"Here you are! I might have known it," exclaimed a bright voice; at the same time a young, slight girl with ruddy cheeks, large, dark, melting eyes, and numerous braids of purple black hair, stood in the door of the arbor.

"The Countess sent me to say, that Arnaud has a new hawk, and everything is arranged. It will brighten the day, she says."

"Must I go?" said Octavia, as if to herself; at the same time she picked up the roll, and then let it fall again.

"Not unless it is your pleasure, dear Octavia," said the young girl, springing forward with the privilege of a friend. "What is it? What has happened?" was asked.

"As long as I was reading I was comforted," was the reply. "Try as I will, I cannot but think that this visit to the Duke will result disastrously to the Vaudois. Did you ever think, Blanche, that it is possible for us to suffer for Christ's sake?"

"You do not take into consideration the Count's influence," replied the young girl, "when the Duke comes to know all; and besides, the Duchess will never allow that harm should come to you; how often you have said to me that her kindness was like that of a dear, elder sister. And her faith is the same. Catherine of France is a Christian."

"I know, and I must not think of it. We are in God's hands. We have only to follow where he leads," said Octavia, brightening.

The young girls walked out of the arbor arm in arm. The tinkling of small bells mingled with the play of the fountain; golden lances shot through the wealth of green leaves and fell in dazzling radiance across the marble pavement. At this moment the Countess was coming down the broad, stone staircase, surrounded by her ladies. She wore a habit of green cloth with slashed sleeves, laced with silver cord, and a hat, the long white plume of which shaded her thoughtful face, and gave her the air of deep-seated pensiveness.

There was much laughing and merriment. Then Valerio, a younger brother of the Count, came down the hall, followed by two lads in laced jackets and close caps. A page was standing with hood and jesses in his hand; while another page was

holding a pied hawk on his finger and flying him lightly for the amusement of a still younger son of the Count.

"It has just come to me that this is a féte-day for children," said one of the court ladies.

"And for this reason Octavia will not join us," observed another, with just the slightest shrug of her pretty shoulders.

Blanche was walking a little aside with Valerio, and apparently oblivious of meaning glances and covert words; while Octavia stood chatting with the Countess and the boy Evrard, and occasionally passing her fingers over the glossy plumage of the bird. Presently a bugle call rung out clear and full, and Arnaud, the huntsman, dressed in green, with a white scarf crossing his breast and knotted under his left arm, cried out:

"To horse! to horse!"

Valerio gave his hand to the Countess, while the pages and gentlemen assisted the ladies. Blanche's sweet face was radiant. As she passed Octavia, she bent in the saddle and whispered: "If Francis comes, explain to him"—while a crimson flush mounted to her temples.

The scene was enlivening. The Countess rode a milk-white steed, which she managed adroitly; and

the whole party looked so bright and happy that instinctively Octavia hid her face in her hands, and sat there, the picture of bereavement.

A company of white-armed girls were sitting at their tambour frames, laughing and chatting pleasantly. As Octavia passed them on the way to her apartment, one of them dropped her needle and followed her.

"If I may trouble you, my lady," she said, dropping her eyes timidly, "Nurse Flavel had a dream last night, and it troubles her. This morning she twice asked for you. 'If I could but hear my child sing, I might forget it,' she said piteously."

"I will go to her. It will do me good as well," answered Octavia. "You were right to come, Erminia. When I can do any good in this way always let me know."

With a bow the girl slid back into her place, leaving Octavia to go at once to her room.

Nurse Flavel occupied a small suite of rooms beyond the chapel. To reach it, one could go through the garden and by the wall, where grapes were hanging in purple clusters. Upon this occasion, however, Octavia chose to go through the chapel. A ray of golden light crossed the altar and fell in a perfect shower over the still open

organ. The deep repose stilled the violent beating of her heart. She climbed up to the seat and played a favorite chant, composed and set to music by one of the ancient Barbas. It was a song of deliverance. It bore her up, as with wings. Another followed. She was near forgetting herself, when a child's voice sounded near her, and a child's hand touched her arm.

"I was afraid at first," said the child. "Are you to sing for Nurse Flavel to-day?" she asked.

"If she would like to have me," answered Octavia, smiling into the dimpled face.

"She always likes to have you. She would have come with me, but she's lame," was said naively.

"And I am not lame. Come, Vera, you must show me the way"—getting down from the organ bench and giving her hand to the child.

Nurse Flavel had lived a worthy life, and now in her age she reminded Octavia of the sun going down in a sea of beauty. Her hair was silvery white, and her eyes had the light of immortality in their gray depths.

"I am fortunate in being so near the chapel," she said. "I heard you singing."

The child Vera went out to gather grapes, and when she was gone Nurse Flavel explained to

Octavia her dream, and the effect it had upon her.

"We must not put any dependence upon a dream," said Octavia, taking one of the thin hands in her own. "We have the promise of our Lord, that he will give us strength according to our need. You remember it says: 'And in nothing terrified by your adversaries; which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.'"

"Every morning I ask myself if I am able," said the nurse. "Then I call to mind what others have suffered; and I pray that, if it is his will, it may not be mine to testify for him in this way."

"Jesus, you remember, prayed that, if possible, the cup might pass from him, if it was the will of his Father. He was human; he shrunk from pain as we do; but he did not yield," replied Octavia.

Vera came in to say that the gardener had given her the ripest and the best.

"He knew nurse had company," she said, with a smile.

As Octavia plucked the grapes one by one, she told of the Count's journey and the hope she had

that this visit to the Duke would cause him to see the injustice of persecuting the Vaudois on account of their religion."

"It is one and the same faith. We are all Vaudois," said the nurse, as she crossed her hands simply.

"I cannot deny that I am at times weighed down with fears and dark forebodings," replied Octavia. "Then the music of his own words falls upon my heart like balm. 'But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.' We are of more consequence than sparrows. Christ died for us. We are his purchase, and we must feel assured at all times of his protection. He will protect his own," said Octavia, looking into the face of the nurse with her beautiful eyes.

"You have comforted me, inasmuch as you have led my poor thoughts up to the blessed Comforter himself. And now you must sing to me," said the nurse.

When the music died away, the sun was throwing slant beams across the well sanded floor.

"How beautiful is the sunset!" said Octavia.

"Every time it sets I am reminded that the sun

of my life is setting! Only to rise again on the morrow," added the nurse, while a smile irradiated her white, thin face.

Vera walked with Octavia as far as the terrace; then she stopped and held up her red lips for a kiss.

"You will come again? I will tell Nurse Flavel that you will come again," said the child, running away just as fast as her feet could carry her.

When Octavia reached the castle, Arnaud's horn was heard winding in and out of the forest, and presently the entire cavalcade came sweeping up in broken lines to the park gates. The Countess was riding leisurely; her sons, Claude and Louis, with their palfreys, on each side of her.

"It has been an exciting day," she said, as she dismounted. "Claude and Louis were wild with delight." Then, dropping her voice quietly, "It is doubtless this visit to Savoy. I cannot feel quite at ease until the Count is with us again. Have you had a good day?" she asked Octavia.

"I was with Nurse Flavel. This woman has a a good memory. She knew of the Count's journey, and this led her to repeat to me many incidents in the past. Her father lived in the time of the Duchess Yolande. She has heard him tell of the edict, enjoining the châtelains of Pignerol, Cavour,

and Lucerna to cause all the Vaudois to return within the pale of the Roman Catholic Church. She fears that Caragli will be finally called to endure what Coni has already suffered."

"May God in his mercy spare us. I tremble when I think of it," returned the Countess, pressing her gloved hands convulsively.

"Our hope is in God. He does not promise us exemption from suffering. He says, and his word is a strong tower, 'My grace is sufficient for thee,'" answered Octavia.

The next instant the lads came up the court-yard with a little noise and riot. Claude was holding a heron's wing in his hand.

"It was my first shot, and I consider it a good omen. Will you wear a heron's plume?" he said to Octavia.

"I will wear it," she said, smiling into the lad's face.

CHAPTER II.

AT THE CASTLE.

THE scholarly tastes of the seigneurs of Solaro brought them into very general notice. Persons of intelligence, as well as rank, crowded around them; and as the castle was open at all times for religious worship, especially for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, so did they come for literary discussion upon topics and questions that had to do with the government and the enlightenment of the people. The Countess of Cardes and the Baroness of Termes, with their young people, were upon such terms of intimacy that their coming and going was not more noticeable than those of their own household.

Blanche De Rovera was the orphan daughter of a cousin of Count Solaro. She had lived in the castle from her babyhood. She was two years younger than Octavia; but with a figure so slight, in addition to a timid nature, that she seemed more a child than she really was. She loved books and poetry with a passion, and her rendering of the old

Romance tongue was a source of gratification to others, as well as a pleasure to herself. Upon one occasion, as she was reading aloud from The Noble Lesson, a poem in the Romance tongue, Francis Carde and his sister Rhetia entered unobserved, and dropped down as willing listeners. Francis had been educated in Geneva. There was that in the reading, however, that surprised him.

"Will you repeat that passage?" he asked, struck by the awed manner of the Countess.

"If there be any one that loves and fears Jesus Christ, of whom it is said, that he will not slander, nor swear, nor lie, nor be guilty of dishonesty or theft, nor give himself up to dissoluteness, nor revenge himself upon his enemies, they call him a Vaudois, and exclaim, 'Death to him!'" read Blanche, in a clear voice.

"I have read it, and still I do not remember that I attached any especial importance to it, as being the expression of passing events," replied the young man.

"This poem shows unmistakably, I think, that the Vaudois Church has been persecuted from very early times," said the Countess, as if in explanation of the reading. "There was some discussion over the question last night; and this morning Blanche

brought the poem to corroborate some of the statements," she added, after a pause.

"When I read this poem," said Francis, in a meditative way, "it was for the purpose of tracing the Vaudois Church by direct line to the Apostles. By whom was it written?" he asked Octavia.

"I see that you are thinking of Waldo and his disciples," she answered, with a smile. "It may be a difficult thing for me to prove; still, I do not consider that the poem originated there."

"What proof have you to the contrary?" he asked.

"This poem is in the Romance language. Waldo was from Lyons. It was not the language of Lyons," she replied.

"Still better proof lies in the fact," interrupted the Countess, "that the date of the poem is anterior to the expulsion of Waldo and his followers from Lyons. They left that city between 1180 and 1190. Another consideration. Waldo is not mentioned in it; neither is there the least allusion which can be supposed to refer to him. This is not surprising, if we suppose the piece was written before his times; but it would be very extraordinary, if its composition had been owing to his direct influence, and if it was produced by his disciples."

"We cannot bring precise evidence," added Octavia. "But the date is fixed by a line which refers to the year eleven hundred.

"The want of positive testimony goes to favor a remote origin," said Rhetia, who had been very attentively listening. "Is it not rational to suppose that the origin of the Vaudois goes back to some period before the time of Waldo, on this very ground: that if their origin had been recent, it must have been easy to trace it?"

"We have discussed this question many times," rejoined Octavia, "and we always arrived at the same conclusion. The Vaudois make the chain which unites the reformed churches with the first disciples of our Saviour. Popery has sought to break this chain, and is still endeavoring to break it. But broken it will not be; because its strength is not from men, but from God."

The Countess was evidently uneasy. The journey the Count had so recently undertaken threw a shadow over the present; while the reading of the poem, and the allusion to the past, recalled scenes of bloodshed, that threatened to be again repeated in the valleys. Octavia saw the strain, and, with a playful remark to Francis and Rhetia, left the apartment.

The castle grounds were full of life and animation. Games of various kinds were played. Further away, archers, habited in green, with white hose, and having a short, white plume in their caps, were stretching their bows, and sending their arrows with unerring precision.

"Shall we join them?" Francis asked. "I have not tried my hand for a week, and my fingers absolutely tingle for a chance to show my skill"—laughing lightly as he spoke.

"By all means," said Octavia, throwing a pink scarf, fringed with pearls, over her fair shoulders.

A horn sounded in the court-yard, and they perceived that Arnaud was surrounded by his dogs; while the pages were flying hither and thither, and a train of ladies and booted cavaliers stood ready to mount. Rhetia exhibited surprise.

"There is infinite amusement here; one tires of doing always the same things. How is it that you do not ride to-day?" she asked Octavia.

"It is Saturday; and we have service to-morrow," was said, firmly.

"You will think us heathen to be reminded of this," continued Rhetia.

"It might not have seemed expedient, as the Count is absent. But his mission is of such a na-

ture, that we felt it would be well. Besides, Barba Lentulus can be with us. And how long this may be, we cannot say," was the response.

They were walking along the border of the archery grounds. Notwithstanding the activity displayed, there was a quiet bearing that betokened thoughtfulness. Francis tried his bow, and failed to send the arrow to its mark.

"Another attempt, and then you shall shame my skill," he said to Octavia.

"Not to-day; my thoughts are elsewhere," she answered, gravely.

Another attempt was not more successful than the first. Francis threw down his bow in despair.

"Now, I think of it, your grace reminded me that it is Saturday, and to-morrow there will be service in the chapel. Is there not service there every day?" he asked Octavia.

"The pastor is not with us every day. Indeed, his visits are rare," was the reply.

"I confess to a curiosity to see this Lentulus. I have heard much of him," said the young man.

"You will come, will you not?" asked Octavia.

"I will come; that is, if you will not trouble me with questions."

"I assure you that I will not say a word to you."

"Then I recant. You shall question me."

"No, you must decide for yourself."

"That I have been trying to do, and I am not decided."

"If you are not on one side, then you are upon the other," said Octavia.

"It is a grave issue," returned the young man.

"The worth of the soul," was said, timidly.

The Countess, leaning upon Blanche's arm, now approached them.

"Did you come off victor?" asked Blanche, with a rare smile.

"These ladies can witness to the lack of skill," replied the young man.

Rhetia was walking slowly; great billowy clouds were floating lightly; the castle, half hidden in the dense shade of majestic trees, reflected the sun-rays from window and turret. The fountain glistened like a shaft of crystal; innumerable walks looked like etchings of silver on emerald. The warmth of color, the vivacity of the different groups, all conspired to render it lovely; and still over all there was a deep-seated seriousness. She felt it. She was glad of a diversion. She slipped away from the Countess and accosted Blanche, as she came to join the promenade.

"You have the air of one who is bent upon discovery. Pray what may it be?" was asked, lightly.

"I have discovered that Lentulus will administer the sacrament to-morrow."

"And does this make you weep, child? Positively you are in tears."

"At the last sacrament I promised"—gazing with humid eyes into the face of Blanche.

"And now you will redeem your promise. Is it not so?" was asked persuasively.

"Alas! I am no nearer to a decision than I was before. Cannot one love these things without danger of suffering?" looking up timidly, as she spoke.

"The blessed Lord suffered. You are not afraid of following in the path he appoints?"

"There are times when I think I am able; and then again, as to-day, I faint and am ready to turn aside."

"Have you said anything to Octavia of this?"

"Not yet," was the answer.

They had fallen quite behind the others. The Countess was walking listlessly, with her hand on Francis' arm.

The ladies of the castle were fond of the chase.

But to-day the Countess was not with them. There was much complaint before they went out, and the run was not long. Even the dogs looked dejected, and the game took to covert. It was useless. Arnaud sounded his horn three times, and three times it echoed along the track of forest and plain.

"We are going home," said one, petulantly.

"It is the best place for us," said another. "It is no day for hunting. To-morrow there will be mass in the chapel."

"Not mass! what are you thinking of?"

"If not mass, what then?"

"The sacrament of the Lord's Supper."

"What is that but mass?" was asked, with heightened color.

"Very different, as you will see if you are there," was the reply.

"Then I shall not be there. I have no idea of being roasted for my religion," was the reply.

Suddenly, between the trees, not ten paces from them, appeared a gentleman, tall, frank, and commanding in his appearance.

"You are going to the castle, doubtless. I will walk with you," he said, pleasantly.

The ladies acknowledged his bow, and together walked leisurely. Meantime, the hunters were

spurring the horses. Their gay streamers, as seen through the openings, had a brilliant effect.

"Have you heard from the Count since he left?" the gentleman asked, as his gaze followed the line of prancing steeds.

"The Countess received news of his arrival. His reception by the Duke and Duchess was most gracious," was the reply.

"God grant that his words may move their hearts to a right appreciation of their duty. For this we must pray," was said fervently.

They were now near enough to be seen by the small party standing on the steps of the castle. At once the Countess, accompanied by Octavia and Francis Carde, came out to receive the visitors.

It was the pastor, Lentulus.

"A very different person from the one I had fancied him to be," said the lady whom the pastor had first addressed. "I shall go to the chapel to-morrow."

"At the risk of being roasted?" asked the other, laughing.

There was a quick look, and the fine eyes filled with tears.

"I spoke foolishly; forget it," she said, hastily. And quickly running up the steps, was lost to view.

CHAPTER III.

SCIPIO LENTULUS, THE PASTOR.

THE sun stood in glory in the heaven, and among the trees groups of people were seen coming up to the chapel. It was a perfect day. The fragrance of flowers filled the air, and birds sung; but the plash of water in the basin was stilled. For it was the Lord's Day, and thoughts of the ordinance of the Supper filled every heart.

The Countess of Moretta arrived early. She had suffered the loss of her estates rather than relinquish her trust in Christ. It was a privilege to receive her, and at the Castle of Solaro she was made welcome. The seigneurs of Ozasco and Frossac, although newly-born to the gospel life, were already nourished with the pure, spiritual milk, which strengthens the soul of the Christian. They had tasted that the Lord is gracious; and, rather than abandon his ways, they renounced their goods, the houses in which they were born, and their hereditary fields, in order to preserve their religion.

As the people took their places, the music of the Twenty-third Psalm was softly chanted. Then the tall form of the pastor, Lentulus, rose up before them; and clasping his hands, he stood with bowed head reverently. Silence reigned in the chapel. Human thought and human feeling was put aside. It was the meeting of the finite with the Infinite. The house was full of his presence. The turning of a leaf, soft as the rippling movement of an angel's wing, broke the spell—then a voice sweetly human, but calm as one anchored in God, broke forth:

"I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die. Believest thou this?"

Francis Carde had taken his seat with the air of a true worshiper. As the pastor closed the book, and leaned slightly to the audience, he repeated the question: "Believest thou this?" A sudden thrill was perceptible in the face of the young man. It was the voice of his own heart sounding outward. He had stifled it; but it would be heard. And, hearing it, he must answer. With the emblems of the broken body and the spilled blood before him, the pastor told a simple story of a life such as never

before was seen upon the earth. A life of love and sacrifice; he told of the paths he trod, the miracles he wrought, the constant source of good to others; but never a thought of himself.

"Through Christ, sufferings become sanctified. And when we are called to suffer, my brethren," he said tenderly, "should we not rejoice and count it gain, inasmuch as we are by this made partakers with Christ? 'If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself.'"

Francis Carde sent a swift glance into the upturned faces. There were those who believed, and their lives were hid with Christ in God; there were others who did not believe. There was a dividing line. Upon which side of that line was he standing? It was a question he had often asked himself.

"There may not come to us another opportunity," said the pastor. "We are troubled on every hand; some of us already know what it is to give up all for Christ. To such, he is above all precious. There is a blessed closeness of communion enjoyed by the soul that holds nothing dearer than Christ. Blessed indeed is such a soul!"

Once more the strains of softest music swelled into a triumphant song. Nurse Flavel's face reflected the beauty of a living faith. The Countess

of Solaro was pale and tearful. The Count had taken upon himself to speak face to face with the enemies of his church. Especial prayer was offered for him that he might be permitted to return, bringing peace to the people of the valleys.

At the table few words were said. It was the Master's feast. He was there; and like John, they were permitted to draw very near to him. The blessing of his grace was upon them, and with his stripes they were healed.

As they passed out, Vera was walking with Octavia.

"I feel so strange," began one of the women near them, "quite as if I were lifted up with the chair on which I am sitting, and were flying away, I know not whither. I feel it here," laying her hand on her heart. "I am living in eternity. Everything is beautiful—the sunlight, the rustling of the leaves, the birds, and the fresh, pure air. Give me your hand, child. Tell me, is it real; is it true? It is God's love over and around me. I live in him. I am his."

For answer, Octavia spoke gently to her, and soothed her into the deep-seated rest of a child, who is conscious of a Father's love and protection. Then she turned and went into Nurse Flavel's room.

Groups were scattered over the grounds. Questions relative to the church were discussed, the persecution of individuals and valleys. There were stringent laws against foreigners. Lentulus was a foreigner.

"We must not be troubled," he said, with a manner that inspired confidence. "God would have us without carefulness. How soothing the words: 'Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.' 'But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.'"

In listening, the Countess of Solaro had grown calm.

"I see it. I must feel that it will be well," she said.

"Confidence in the protecting care of an individual brings rest. A full, firm confidence leaves no room for distrust," returned the pastor.

"And in rest we grow upward. I will think of this—I will rest," said the Countess.

It was victory; she had for the time overcome her fears. Would she forget, and go backward? This question arose in Octavia's mind, as she heard the words of the Countess; but she made no re-

sponse. She was just returning from Nurse Flavel's room.

Lentulus mingled freely with the people. He had a word for each. He was well aware that it might be the last time he should see them. But there was nothing sad in the thought—nothing but joy. As he walked from one group to the other, every one was struck with his appearance. His figure was tall and commanding, with that natural majesty that rendered him noticeable in any company. Octavia encountered him at the entrance of one of the tents.

"You will find Francis Carde here," she said. "I am anxious for you to speak to him. I think he has something to say that will please you."

With this, Octavia turned to her companions. The pastor entered the tent; a few moments later, however, she saw him walking away in the direction of the castle, and Francis Carde was with him. The pastor's room was on the second floor, and communicated by a spiral staircase with the garden. She saw them as they crossed the garden and mounted the steps. On the landing, they stopped and looked over the scattered groups. Then they entered, and the door was shut.

CHAPTER IV.

COUNT SOLARO'S RETURN.

THE presence of the Count of Solaro served to revive old memories in the heart of the Duke of Savoy. In the war between France and Spain, the Duke had been the ally of the latter power, and had lost all his possessions, which, however, were now restored to him. Many of the seigneurs who fought by his side had embraced Protestantism. In remembrance of substantial favors that he had himself received from these, he could not restrict liberty of conscience, and that religious quiet which they cultivated in their own homes. Under special security he allowed them their property and their belief, provided they would abstain from public religious exercises in their houses or elsewhere. The Count plead for more freedom.

"Religious service at home is a privilege that every family should enjoy," he said.

The Duchess besought her husband to grant the request, and it was at last reluctantly given.

Notwithstanding there were no gatherings in the

churches, there was a perceptible increase in the number of awakened souls, while Roman Catholicism had fallen into a state of degradation. An Inquisitor, writing to the Holy Office of Rome, says:

"I cannot describe to you the utter decay of everything connected with religion in this country; the churches are in ruins; the altars are despoiled; the sacerdotal vestments are tattered; the priests are ignorant; and all things sacred are held in contempt."

This letter had barely reached Rome when the Duke of Savoy was told that, having returned to the possession of his hereditary states, his glory required the re-establishment, also, in its integrity, of the religion of his ancestors.

It was by these artful methods that a Prince was induced to become the executioner of his most faithful subjects, to weaken his states, and to destroy his people. The Duke began by urging upon the people the necessity of outwardly conforming to the rules of the Roman Catholic Church, hinting cunningly that it would be the same with their belief. A few were deceived by this specious reasoning; but the majority refused to bow to an outward form, and act the lie in the face of high heaven.

The Duke of Savoy was pressed upon all sides. He was irritable, and his health suffered. In that same year the Cardinal Babba wrote from Rome, by order of his Holiness, to inform the Duke that he would recall the nuncio accredited to his court, if he refused to put to death a relapsed heretic of Vercelli. The name of the prisoner was George Olivet. He was a proselyte, whom Roman Catholicism had not been able to retain. His Holiness, the Holy Church, the Holy Office, demanded that he should die. It was made an occasion of diplomatic rupture. From this document we learn that the Duke of Savoy, notwithstanding his severities, was still accused of resistance to the plans of Rome. No master can be more difficult to serve than tyranny, and none is more ungrateful.

Orders were therefore transmitted to the governors of the surroundings towns, that the fugitive Reformed should not be received into them. Emmanuel Philibert even wrote to this effect to the governors of Saluzzo, Nice, and Provence, as well as to Charles IX., to whom, by this means, he hoped to make himself agreeable. The instructions did not bear that shelter must be absolutely refused to the Reformed, but that they must not be received without their promising to abjure. This measure,

however, was equivalent to an absolute proscription; for if they had chosen to abjure, they would have no need to seek shelter so far from home.

The Count of Solaro, fully perceiving how inhuman and senseless these arbitrary orders were, besought the Duke, as a personal favor, at least, to postpone the execution of them till he had gone in person to Caragli, to judge with his own eyes of their propriety. The Duke consented to the journey. Two days before his arrival, the command had been given by the priest for all Protestants to leave, as the Duke was on his way. It was a cruel movement, and was unknown to the Count. On the approach of the royal visitor, the Reformed fell into the error of running away. Such an act was regarded as a mark of alienation from their sovereign. The Duke was irritated, and immediately caused a proclamation to be issued, expressly forbidding any kind of provisions being carried out of the town, in order to punish, in this way, the Reformed who had unfortunately left it on his arrival.

The Count of Solaro made haste to inquire into the matter, and the story was traced; but the priest received only a mild reprimand.

Thus far the house of Solaro, by reason of the friendly relations of the two families, was allowed

many privileges that were refused to others. This was not to be continued, however. The Archbishop of Turin, not satisfied with the leniency manifested by the Duke of Savoy, repaired to Caragli, desiring, as he expressed himself, merely to bring back the people to the true church. He made his appearance there with a numerous suite, and with all the ceremony of royalty. He said that his heart was full of kindness for his "poor wandering sheep," as he called the fugitive Christians. He sent them safe conducts, and invited them to conference with himself. Some came, and a few were won back to Popery. Before he departed, he established, through the Duke of Savoy, a garrison in the town, the soldiers of which were to be maintained and lodged in the houses of the Protestants, until the latter should return to Roman Catholicism.

The Count of Solaro, with his brothers, visited the people, and enjoined patience.

"War threatens between France and Savoy," he said, "and the Duke will soon find it for his interest to recall his men, and will doubtless free you from the necessity of flying from your homes as fugitives."

The war cloud that threatened Savoy proved to be a wind cloud, pushed here and there, and it finally disappeared. The Senate at Turin did not

cease to inflame the mind of the Duke. He said that such a family as that of Villanova-Solaro ought no longer to be permitted to stand as a bulwark for Protestantism. Accordingly, the Chancellor, Count of Stropiano, their relative, visited the castle, and in the name of his royal highness, entreated them to abjure; but they were immovable.

"Let our sovereign," said they, "demand any other sacrifice, and we shall have pleasure in making it."

"He repeats to you, by my mouth," said the Chancellor, "that it is his resolution not to suffer two religions in the country."

These steadfast Protestants displayed the greatness of true nobility in the troubles that menaced them.

"Conviction imposes a necessity," they said to Count Stropiano. We could have wished to remain in our ancestral home; but we will not abandon our faith. We are in the hands of God. We are his; neither can we prove disloyal, although an earthly sovereign commands it."

"Then let me advise you to sell your estates immediately. The friendly relations between your family and the house of Savoy have, in the eyes of

the Senate, protected you quite too long," was said resolutely.

The Chancellor Stropiano was a rigid Roman Catholic. He could not comprehend how it was, that his relations could make themselves fugitives rather than conform outwardly to the ceremonies of the Papal Church.

Before he left the castle, the Chancellor, with the interest of a relative, endeavored to win Octavia to go with him for a visit to the Duchess of Savoy. Octavia, at this period, was scarcely eighteen. She had black hair and a brilliant complexion; great, gazel-like eyes, veiled by long lids; coral and delicate lips; a graceful neck; a full, enchanting figure, with feet and hands exquisitely moulded.

"It is a pity to deny the court so much beauty," he said to the Count, her brother. "If only a good Catholic, Catherine de Medicis would be as proud of her as Charles IX. is of his 'Ma Sœur Margot,' 'Sister Madge,' as he calls her."

A swift look shot out of Octavia's eyes; for she had been listening.

"Marguerite is not a Roman Catholic," she exclaimed. "Neither is Reni of France, nor Catherine of Savoy."

"Tut, tut!" said the Chancellor, softly. "If

these right royal ladies are not good Catholics, they are sufficiently wise to keep their opinions to themselves. They do not set themselves in opposition. As good subjects, they are obedient to the higher powers."

The speech was intended to be conciliatory. Octavia regained her self-possession.

"As to the proposed visit. I cannot leave my family at this time," she said, with an air of well-bred complacency. "It is possible that I may make a visit at some future period, if the Duchess will be so gracious as to receive me."

Count Stropiano professed himself to be well satisfied, and the leave-taking was altogether in a fraternal spirit.

This outward calm, however, did not deceive Count Solaro. Caragli must be abandoned. His brothers were of the same opinion. Accordingly they made sale of a part of their lands, and retired to the Marquisate of Saluzzo, which was then in the possession of France. During several years of trouble and domestic agitation, they were sometimes in France and sometimes in Piedmont; and always, wherever they were, they became a conspicuous mark for Papal hate and treachery.

CHAPTER V.

THE MARQUISATE OF SALUZZO.

IN the bottom of the basin and on the elevated level grounds of Paesane, and in the deep valleys of Cruzzol and Onzino, where the head waters of the Po descend from Mount Viso, the Vaudois appear to have had their most ancient settlements in the province of Saluzzo. It has been alleged that their origin in these mountains was contemporaneous with that of the other Vaudois who inhabit the left bank of the Po. Be this as it may, the Marquisate of Saluzzo dates its existence from the twelfth century. This tract of country was given to Beatrice, granddaughter of Adelaide of Suza. They remained, therefore, dependent upon the marche of Suza, and when the territory of Suza passed into the hands of the Counts of Savoy, these Counts found themselves also the suzerains of the Marquises of Saluzzo.

Saluzzo had known persecution; her people had been tortured by command of the Papal See, and her lands had gone to swell the wealth of the

hereditary princes; but at the time when Coni and Caragli suffered most, the Edict of Pacification, newly obtained by the King of Navarre in favor of co-religionists, caused an influx of Vaudois from other parts, who thus crowded to the living springs of grace as to another Siloam; and thus evangelical doctrines spread, and they had pastors, deacons, and consistories, and established a regular service, which only could not always be conducted in public.

The Count of Solaro, in leaving Caragli for Saluzzo, looked to this Edict of Pacification as a promise of safety. Hardly had he established himself, however, when Louis de Bisaque, who at this time succeeded the Count de Nevers as the King's lieutenant in the province of Savoy, wrote to the court to have the authorization withdrawn. Charles IX. himself replied, in these terms:

"By the advice of our much honored lady and mother, we declare, by these presents, that in the Edict of Pacification we never intended to comprehend the exercise of religion in the towns of Piedmont."

The Count of Solaro was troubled. Doubtless it was on his account that this letter had been written. Charles IX., although a King, was still

but the tool of Catherine de Medici. The result was a consultation with his brothers, and preparation made for another departure not yet decided upon.

The Countess of Solaro was in delicate health, and the new danger filled her with apprehension. Drawing her children to her side, she wept over them.

"Was ever a mother more unfortunate? For months I have lived as with a sword suspended over my head and held by a single hair."

Octavia attempted to comfort her; while her calm trust and firm demeanor served to strengthen the Count and give him courage. Blanche de Rovera was still with them. In adversity, her shy, timid manner took the form of very great openness. She dared to think and to say the truth, with the calmness that denotes strength. Her enemies were awed, and after the first few questions did not urge her to say more.

"We must be prudent," Octavia was sometimes forced to say.

"But not shrinking. Let them have the truth. It is wholesome and will do them good," answered Blanche.

"The truth, yes; but in such a way that it will

teach them, rather than stir them to evil," urged Octavia.

At this time Valerio Solaro had been to Chieri, a town not far from Saluzzo. There he met with M. La Rochelle, a gentleman in the suite of Count de Nevers, who informed him, that the King of Navarre (Henry IV.), was soon to receive in marriage the hand of Marguerite of France, the sister of Charles IX.

"This is well," cried Solaro. "Now we are secure. Now we can claim a little peace."

"How is this?" asked La Rochelle.

"Marguerite is not a Roman Catholic," returned Solaro, not without distrust now that he had gone so far.

"True, and Henry is the King of the Huguenots," he added, with a countenance that betrayed nothing.

"We are Vaudois; but our religion is much the same," returned Solaro, with a well feigned air of indifference. "This marriage at first amazed me; for I had considered the King inimical to Protestantism. This giving his sister to a Huguenot, shows that the rumor is false. He is not merely friendly, he is fraternal; the King of Navarre will be his brother-in-law."

"It does strike one as being singular," said La Rochelle. "But we have many Protestants at court. The Duke de Guise, bitter as he is, may frequently be seen in juxtaposition to the old Admiral Coligny; or quietly conversing with the Prince de Condé. As for doctrines, I don't think it matters. For myself, I hardly know at times what I am—Catholic or Huguenot"—laughing lightly as he spoke.

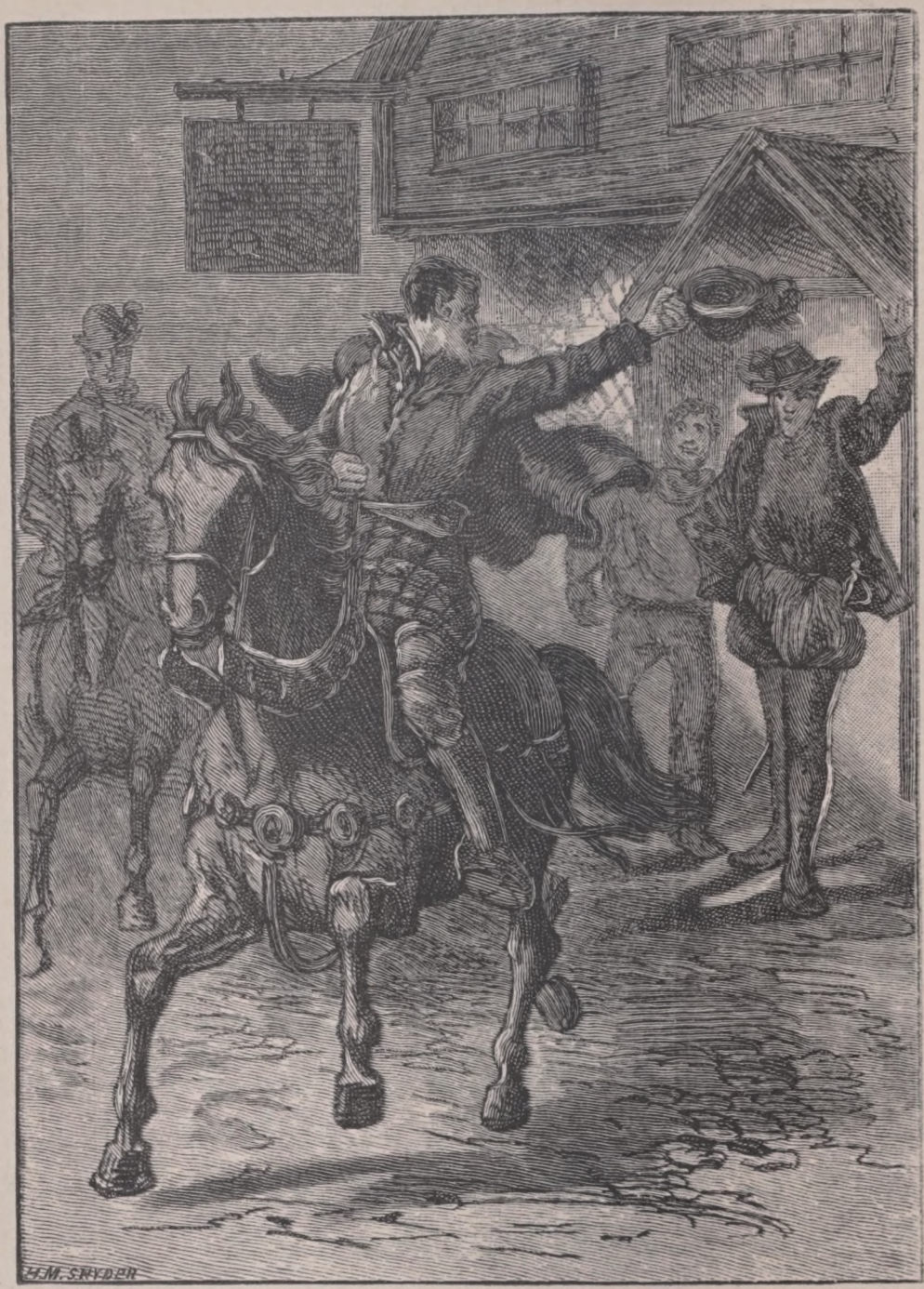
The business that called Solaro to Chieri was finished; but the night was coming, and a storm threatened. Spurred and booted for the ride, the young man looked perplexed. It was a journey that required sunlight.

"The inn is not very promising; but I have a room. If you will do me the honor to share it with me, you are welcome," said La Rochelle.

With this Solaro gave the gentleman a more scrutinizing look. He wore a black doublet, ornamented with jet buttons, and a short cloak of the same color faced with pale violets; his boots were of black leather, polished, and the hilt of his sword was of steel, cunningly worked; his complexion was dark, and his eyes were blue; a small moustache shaded his chiseled lips; his teeth were good, and his smile was frank and cordial.

"A thousand thanks for your kindness; and, believe me, I shall ever remember it as an honor that so courtly a gentleman had the goodness to offer me a share of his room," said Solaro, with a grace that continued to win for him in the opinion of La Rochelle. "But look! the clouds are not as threatening; and before an hour the moon will be up."

Solaro looked every inch the gentleman. La Rochelle remarked this at the first. "What a pity he is a Protestant," was said under his breath. The former, fearing that he had already made himself too free, determined, whether storm or not, to set out on his return. To remain longer in company with one evidently so agreeable and well mannered would only be to enlarge the confidence already begun between them, and might in the end lead to very unpleasant complications. Thus questioning with himself, Solaro ordered his horse and paid his score. The inn-keeper was a little, sinister-looking man, with a shock of coarse gray hair, surmounted by a close, red cap; he had a hooked nose, like the beak of a bird of prey, and small, black, bead-like eyes, that seemed to swell and burn with a fierce heat. As the gentleman stood ready to mount, he feigned an unusual degree of interest with regard to the



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journey, and the necessity of going out on such a wild night.

"We could make you very comfortable; and the rooms are quite clean," he began. "Many's the gentleman that puts up here for the night, and a laugh goes with him in the morning."

Solaro replied that he knew the roads, and his horse was quite fresh, thanks to the care he had had. Besides, the ride was not long; he would be at home before midnight. Then vaulting into the saddle, he bowed with courtly grace to La Rochelle and the small man in the red cap; and, followed by his attendant, swept out into the night.

"Bravo! he rides well. Who can he be?" exclaimed La Rochelle, as his eyes followed the flying steed and the masterly hand that held him.

"You don't know him!" cried the man in the red cap.

"No!" with a shrug of the shoulders, that did not escape the flashing eyes of the landlord. "How can I be expected to know the gentlemen of these parts? This is my first journey in this direction; and, indeed, I wouldn't have made it now but for—" stopping suddenly, and feigning to be much occupied with a couple of greyhounds playing near him.

"The Vicar, you would say!" said the man in the red cap, with a laugh. Then, with a thread of malice in his words: "The Vicar is a man to carry a secret, and still he is not above the desire to please. He honors us with a visit often, and he is not above asking after our guests."

"Just so!" said Rochelle. "What splended animals!" again speaking to the greyhounds. "Pray, do they belong here? But first answer with regard to the gentleman who just left. Doubtless you know all about him."

"That I do!" said the little man, pleased to see that his guest was not above talking with him in a friendly way. "The house of Solaro was a noble house, and honored as the Duke's own. But times have changed"—closing his eyes so that the gleaming fire was flattened to a line.

"You say, was! Is it not at present a noble house?" asked La Rochelle.

"As for that matter, the house may be; but the Count and his brothers are Protestants, and the Duke gave out that two religions could not be allowed; and silly as they were, they forfeited their estates, rather than give up their religion."

"I might have known it. I did know it," said La Rochelle to himself. Then a moment later he

said to the landlord: "A bad business; a very bad business. Why don't he come to court? He would find himself in genial company," he said with a loud laugh, and, at the same time, turned to enter the house.

"A pity you must take your dinner alone," said the landlord; "and by the smell of the stew I think it is ready. And a lusty mess it is; enough for a half dozen men. I made sure the gentleman would join you; and he had every appearance of being a good eater."

"And as he did not, you shall take his place. It is a pity to have a good meal half eaten; and I have but a poor appetite when a storm is threatening," was said, lightly.

"You do me honor; but I see my wife is winking at me; and when a woman winks at a man, and that man is her husband, there is sure to be something in the wind more than common."

"But you will take a glass to our further acquaintance. A man of your intelligence is worth talking with. You can doubtless tell me many things about the people in your neighborhood, and a wink more or less will not harm," said the stranger, facetiously.

"As to that matter, a man who keeps an inn and

has kept one for nigh upon twenty years, and especially an inn where the gentry comes, is expected to know something; and my wife is none of the slowest. And here's to your health, and my wife will join me in this," said the small man, draining his cup at the same time.

"Your wife, yes. Here's to the good woman, and she'll wink all the more," said La Rochelle, laughing, as he filled the cup to the brim, and handed it himself to the landlord.

"Thanks! and again I say thanks," said the small man, as he hurried away to his wife.

"The little beast! If he plays me false," said the young man, as he nibbled away at his dinner. "Such wretched cooking; but better could not be expected. I must pretend that it is nice, however. But it is all pretence. Here Trifle!"—to the greyhound, who came bounding through the window—"you must help me eat the miserable stuff. Heaven grant it is not poisoned!"

Before the meal was finished a smartly dressed man entered, and, shutting the door behind him, threw a swift gaze around the room.

"You need not fear to say what you have come to say. We are alone," said La Rochelle, dropping his fork and looking straight at the man.

"The Vicar has the list made out; but he does not wish to send it. He desires to say to you, by word of mouth, many things that he did not think wise to write. You can use your own discretion in this case."

"When can he see me?" asked La Rochelle, leaning back in an easy attitude.

"At your pleasure."

"Very well, I please to go at this moment," rising from the table as he spoke. "By the by," drawing near the man and speaking in a low voice, "did you see a tall, fine-looking gentleman with but one attendant ride out of the inn-yard an hour ago?"

"Mounted on a white horse, much such an one as the king might bestride? Yes, I saw him," answered the man.

"He rejoices over the coming marriage. He considers it a glorious idea. The Protestants now will triumph. Bah! I think he ought to be there. He must be there."

The two went out together. At the door of the Vicar's residence, La Rochelle was left to enter alone.

CHAPTER VI.

THE APPROACHING NUPTIALS.

SEVERAL weeks elapsed, and Valerio Solaro had ceased to think that ill consequences would follow his meeting with the stranger at Chieri, and the frankness with which he had expressed himself on hearing of the contemplated marriage of the King of Navarre with Marguerite of France. Of course it was an indiscretion; but La Rochelle was not a Roman Catholic, and doubtless he did not give it a second thought. Indeed, the times were so quiet that the Count had, upon several occasions, opened his house for public worship, and the Countess, with Octavia and Blanche de Rovera, set about their usual occupations with hearts lighter than they had known for months before.

On leaving Caragli they had left nearly all of their household behind them. Only Arnaud the huntsman, and a few poor women, clung to them still. Nurse Flavel was too feeble to bear the change, and had died very soon after they left.

Vera had friends who would provide for her; so had many of the others.

"We are ourselves wanderers. It is not in our power to protect you," the Countess had said to the members of her large family.

Arnaud was not alone a huntsman. He was a man of quick apprehension, and of a good degree of intelligence. Added to this, he was devoted to the Count of Solaro, and his ears were open to the slightest rumor of approaching evil. The children, Claude, Louis, and Evrard, looked to him to teach them in all manly sports; and when the Count or his brothers needed an outrider, Arnaud was promoted to a position of social equality and confidence. Arnaud had been to Chieri with Valerio. He remembered the stranger, and had likewise learned, what he did not repeat when he reached home, namely, that La Rochelle's visit to Chieri had for its object a personal interview with the Vicar. Had he made this known, it would doubtless have caused uneasiness, and no good would have come of it. By keeping it to himself, he had the satisfaction of knowing that others were not troubled by it; and he could watch quite as well, perhaps better, by not being pressed with questions.

"I think it will come," he ventured to say to himself at times. "Never a storm so severe as the one that follows a dead calm."

Under the dominion of France the pastors who had been in Piedmont enjoyed a toleration equal to the other Protestants of that country; but these pastors were mostly foreigners, and on that account had been forbidden Piedmont.

The same proclamation was now made in Saluzzo. The Duke of Savoy at the same time demanded of the lieutenant of the King of France, in the province of Saluzzo, that he should cause all who were not born within the kingdom to remove out of his government, and that he should not receive any fugitive natives of Piedmont who might retire to it. The Governor of Saluzzo gave orders accordingly.

This blow was principally directed against the pastors who were not natives of the Marquisate; but not being able to determine upon forsaking their flocks, they remained in the country. Truchi, a native of Cental in Provence, and Soulf, a native of Coni in Piedmont, were imprisoned at Saluzzo. Their colleague, Galatée, although a very aged man, repaired to the castle of the King of Navarre, in order to secure his influence at court in

their favor, and was successful. The Duke of Nevers, Governor of Saluzzo, even received orders to set all the prisoners at liberty.

This movement on the part of the King of Navarre was a means of encouragement to the churches. They now raised their heads, like a vigorous plant which the storm, that does not altogether break it down, causes to strike root more deeply in the soil.

The family of Count Solaro felt an elasticity of spirit quite new to them. Marguerite was a Protestant, so was Catherine of Savoy, and René, the Duchess of Ferrara. So many of the royal family being on their side argued well for Protestantism; and already the Vaudois began to think that the time would soon come when they should be re-instated in their ancestral home. Especially the young sons of the Count felt the elation, and with Arnaud, they could talk of little else; while the faithful man, with keener vision, wiped his eyes furtively, lest tears should lead them to question him.

August was the month set for the nuptials, and this was approaching. Before it came, however, a communication was received from their relative, Chancellor Count Stropiano, suggesting the pro-

priety of the Count of Solaro presenting himself at the capital on that occasion; and further suggesting that such behavior on his part would, no doubt, greatly aid in winning back the estates, of which he had been unjustly defrauded.

The spirit of the letter was kind; but it was so unlike the threatening attitude he manifested upon the occasion of his visit, that they took alarm. Was it possibly a trap to ensnare the Count? Arnaud made bold to say that this was the case, and advised delay. Then came a letter written by one of the ladies at court, and by direction of the Queen mother Catherine de Medici, with an invitation couched in the most friendly terms, that the beautiful Octavia, of whose accomplishments and learning she had heard such favorable report, might be permitted to join the ladies at her court during the festivities that would follow the marriage of the Princess Marguerite with the King of Navarre. It was not a command; but a desire respectfully uttered; and, for a season, it produced a very pleasing effect in the mind of each member of the family except Octavia.

"I am not familiar with such scenes," she said. "I have never been at court; and, besides, it could hardly be expected of one who has shared exile,

thus suddenly to appear in a circle so widely removed from her present surroundings."

Blanche, with a lighter nature, could not comprehend how Octavia could keep from flying away, especially as the Duchess of Savoy had shown a sisterly kindness in all her intercourse; and would, doubtless, feel a real pleasure in having the young girl under her immediate supervision.

Thus far the Countess had simply listened. There were grave questions, and questions that would naturally come to a young and pretty woman.

"In order to a good appearance one must dress in the prescribed style. Not that dress is in itself important; but often the graceful ease so much admired in a lady, has to do largely with her habiliments," was said näively.

"It is not a command," said the Count; "and as I am included, we will receive the invitation as a grace." And the subject was at once dismissed.

During all the conversations the young sons of the Count had been present. They silently listened to everything, and then turned it over with Arnaud the huntsman.

"If our father would but go, I think it would be a grand thing," said Claude. "The marriage

of the king's sister with the King of Navarre, must be a splendid affair; and then there will be no more robbing and killing each other. There will be no separate interests." The young face was full of enthusiasm. A royal pageant was pictured on the canvas of his imagination, and the light of his fancy invested it with a beauty and a grandeur to which human eyes must be a stranger.

"Not so! not so!" said the huntsman, in an under tone. Then louder, and with an angry flush rising to his face: "This marriage is more of the Queen mother's managing. She hates the Protestants. She will exterminate them if she can."

"Then why does she allow this marriage?" asked Claude.

"She does not allow it. It is the means to an end. We shall see it. We shall see it!"—his voice rising to a higher pitch, and then lapsing into silence.

In remaining with Count Solaro, Arnaud had ample opportunity to know all that was going on in other valleys. Saluzzo was in the enjoyment of comparative peace. But the prevalent spirit was one of hate. The light of the Reformation sweeping outward revealed the nakedness of Popery. The mass was ignored. In the eyes of Pope and

Cardinal any measure was legitimate, and any crime worthy of absolution, whereby Protestantism could be hurled to the ground, and Romanism once more be permanently established. Hence this marriage was looked upon with suspicion.

"It is a trap!" he would say, taking care that his words were not heard; for how could he explain? And he was conscious that he could not explain; and still it was evident to his own mind. The invitation to the Count, and the chance meeting at Chieri between Valerio Solaro and M. la Rochelle, filled him with alarm. Such gentlemen were not seen in that part of the country without some special object. There was one comfort, however. Octavia had no wish to mingle in such festivities, and the Count was certainly not making any preparation. Should he begin to do so, he would consider it his duty to speak out.

So much absorbed with his own thoughts, Arnaud had not perceived that Claude had put himself in fencing costume, and was now standing with his foil ready for action.

"Valerio is to give me a lesson. My father says that I must practice more thoroughly."

Arnaud nodded his head in approval, and the lesson began.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MASSACRE OF THE HUGUENOTS.

THERE was a splendid fête at the Louvre in Paris. The windows of the royal residence were brilliantly illuminated, and the squares and streets adjacent were crowded with people, although it was past midnight.

This assemblage, pressing and turbulent, resembled in its outlines a dark and rolling sea, each swell of which increases to a foaming wave. The waves of this sea beat against the walls of the Louvre on the one hand, and on the other the Hôtel de Bourbon offered a strong barrier.

In spite of the royal fête, there was something threatening in the aspect of the people.

The court was celebrating the marriage of Marguerite de Valois, daughter of Henry II., and sister of King Charles IX., with Henry de Bourbon, King of Navarre; and that very morning the Cardinal de Bourbon had united the young couple, with the usual ceremonies observed at the nuptials of the royal daughters of France, on a magnificent

dais erected purposely at the entrance of Notre-Dame.

This marriage caused astonishment. People broke into groups, that stood out like islands in the great deep. There was much painful surmising, and even grave questioning among certain persons who saw more clearly than others. They could not comprehend this singular union—the virtual coming together of the Protestant and the Roman Catholic parties; for the King did not hesitate to say, boldly:

"In giving my sister Margot to Henry of Navarre, I give my sister to all the Protestants of the kingdom."

This speech assured some, and led others to tremble. They read in it a double meaning. They asked themselves if this marriage would bring about a coalition between such men as the Prince de Condé and the Duke d'Anjou, the young Duke de Guise and Admiral de Coligny. Especially did the friends of the Admiral say this. Instead of bitter opposition, and a price upon the reverend head of the Admiral, of a hundred and fifty thousand crowns, the King now honored him and called him "father," and openly declared that he would in the future confide the management of war to him

alone. In reference to the war in Flanders, he said:

"My father, there is one other thing against which we must be on our guard. The Queen, my mother, must not know of this undertaking; we must keep it so quiet that she does not hear a word; or, prying as she is, she will spoil it all."

Of those who questioned, probably not one was further from being at ease than Admiral de Coligny. Still, he made one at the Church of the Notre-Dame. Not without suspicion, we may suppose; for before his departure from Chatillon, a woman had pressed her way to him; and, laying hold of his bridle-rein, had begged him not to go to Paris.

"Oh! sir, do not set out on this journey, from which, if you go, you will never return."

The Admiral was much moved. Nevertheless, his word was given; he must go. Teligny, his son-in-law, was likewise in the company; and to him the woman made use of the same words.

Withal, there was mirth and abandonment in Paris. The magnificent apartments of the Louvre were filled with the noblest of the land. Protestants and Roman Catholics mingled freely. The King, the Queen, the Duke d' Anjou, and the Duke

d' Alençon did the honors of the royal fête, with all courtesy and kindness.

The Duke d' Anjou had just distinguished himself in the battles of Jarnac and Montcontour. And this hero of eighteen smiled benignly, as compliments were showered upon him, and he was likened to the conquerors of Pharsalia and Issus. Queen Catherine, radiant with joy and diffuse in compliment, congratulated Prince Henry de Condé on his marriage to the lovely Marie de Cleves; and the young Duke de Guise, the haughtiest noble there, seemed to have forgotten his oath to "exterminate the heretics," and conversed freely with Teligny at the very moment that the bride, divested of her royal mantle and flowing veil, was led in by her brother, Charles IX., and presented to the guests, as Queen of Navarre.

Three days after this, Charles, with a smile quite as bland as a May morning, and words as soft as evening zephyrs, sanctioned, if he did not suggest, the assassination of Admiral de Coligny; and this was followed by the death of Teligny, and others of the Protestant leaders, in quick succession.

The carnage once begun was not to end with the blood of the leaders. Everywhere the pursuit of the Huguenots grew more fierce and bitter. And

at length the King of Navarre and the Prince de Condé were the only survivors.

Not satisfied with this, the shout rung outward, "Death to the Huguenots!" And the Protestants, wherever they could be found, and irrespective of sex or age, were shot down at sight; making a holocaust of sixty thousand. Enough certainly to satisfy the hearts of the infamous Catherine de Médici and the cruel Duke de Guise. Enough to win from Charles IX., the expression, that they were all good subjects; but they were Protestants, and he had assured them, from the first, that he would have but one religion; therefore, it was their own fault.

The sanguinary thunders of St. Bartholomew; sixty thousand victims butchered in a few days; echoed along the valleys with a deadening, withering sense of desolation. Those who had been honored with an invitation to the marriage of the King of Navarre were thankful that they had stayed at home. The Count of Solaro assembled his family, and thanked God for his deliverance. Arnaud wept tears of joy.

"They did not get my brave master," he said to himself. "Neither did our beautiful Octavia make one of the number; but the murderers will not be

satisfied. No! as long as there is one Protestant left they will not be satisfied."

Meantime it was discovered that an order to cause all the Protestants of the Province of Saluzzo to be massacred in one night, had been sent to Biragne, who was then Governor. Ignorant that this measure related to the whole of France, he was troubled at the order, and submitted it to the Chapter of the place. Some gave their opinion in favor of a complete and immediate execution of the decree; but sentiments more humane were also expressed. And here, let me say, that the voice of the Archdeacon, a Roman Catholic, Samuel Vacca, by name, was raised in opposition to the massacre of the Protestants.

"It is only a few months," said he, "since we received letters-patent from the King, that the pastors who were in confinement should be set at liberty, and their flocks left in the enjoyment of their ministrations. But nothing has since happened which can be regarded as a reason for such a change; it must be supposed that this cruel order has been occasioned by false reports. Let us inform his majesty that these are honest and peaceable people; and that nobody has anything to say to their charge, except in regard to their religious

opinions; and if the King persists in his design, it will always be but too soon to carry it into execution."

Thus the Protestants of Saluzzo were saved; for the reprobation which immediately arose against these base butcheries prevented their renewal.

Amidst the anxiety which the news of these massacres occasioned almost everywhere, the Duke of Savoy hastened to re-assure the people of the Vaudois valleys, by strongly declaring that he reprobated such crimes; and at Saluzzo also, a number of Protestant families, dreading the execution of the orders which had been received, took refuge with Roman Catholic families, on whose kindness they could rely, and who sheltered them as brethren till the storm was past.

Some troubles, however, took place at this time in the valley of Perouse, which belonged to France. In the midst of this almost universal fury against the Protestants, the pastor of St. Germain, Francis Guérin, had the courage to undertake, alone and unaided, to combat Roman Catholicism by arms more terrible and less bloody—those of argument. One day he ascended to Pramol, where Popery reigned in full strength. It was the Lord's Day. The people were assembled in the church; the priest

celebrated mass. Francis Guérin took his place with the hearers, and waited in silence till the services were terminated. No one suspected that, in that crowd of obscure persons was a soldier of the cross, who, armed according to the Scriptural expressions, with "the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God," was speedily, with all the power of love and courage, to make that word triumphant over the servile forces of superstition.

The priest of Pramol having concluded his service, the pastor rose and asked if he had finished.

"Yes," replied the priest.

"What then is it which you have been doing?"

"I have been saying mass."

"And what is the mass?" The question was put in Latin. There was no reply. Again the question was repeated, and this time in Italian.

"Be so good as to explain to me what the mass is?" demanded the pastor.

The priest was as silent as before.

Then the pastor, inflamed with zeal for his God, and with ardent and devout compassion for so many enslaved souls, ascended the pulpit in the midst of an audience dumb with astonishment, and exclaimed:

"Good people, you see by whom you allow yourselves to be guided—by a man who does not know what he does. He says mass every day, and he does not know what the mass is. He feeds you with a thing which neither you nor he know anything about. Come, leave behind you these vain superstitions! Souls are too precious to be thus trifled with. Behold the Bible," opening it at the same time. "Listen to the word of God, and you shall be saved."

The people, excited and motionless, ventured not to take any decided course.

"I do not wish to take anybody by surprise," said the pastor, "and, to give your priest time to prepare his answers, I will return next Lord's Day Meanwhile, pray to God, that he may enlighten you, and incline you to receive the truth without weakness and without prejudice."

Guérin then left the church and redescended to St. Germain. In the course of the week many of the people of Pramol came to him, and opened their hearts to him, and asked his advice; and to each he gave a Bible, saying:

"There is your best counsellor. Consult it often, and you will have no need of other directions."

Next Lord's Day he went up again to Pramol.

The concourse of people was much larger. Curiosity, surprise, and a multitude of different emotions agitated their hearts. The new apostle made his way into the church; the crowd pressed around him; he seemed to be already their pastor. But the priest did not make his appearance; no one presented himself to celebrate or to defend the mass.

"Pastor," said a voice, "speak of the word of God."

"Yes, if you like, I will speak to you."

And without delay he proceeded to expound to them the great doctrines of salvation. It may easily be imagined that they triumphed amid these simple and awakened souls, for whom Popery at first did not think it worth while to contend with the gospel.

This event passed unobserved in the great troubles of the times. The Church of Rome was too much intoxicated with the bloody triumphs of St. Bartholomew to alarm herself about so petty a triumph of faith. But nothing is insignificant which concerns the infinite and immortality; and the salvation of a soul is of more importance in the sight of God than the conquest of a kingdom.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SOLARO FAMILY DRIVEN FROM SALUZZO.

THE happiness arising from the fact that they were still together, was not of long duration. The Count of Solaro was a mark against which the anathemas of the Papal Church were hurled continually. He was the firm supporter of evangelical truth; his influence, in whatever condition he might be, was widely felt. His house, poor and uncomfortable in comparison with his former home, was open to the people. Songs of rejoicing resounded from that humble hearthstone, while the reading of the word strengthened and brought comfort to all who listened; and the prayer of faith brought healing to broken hearts.

The Roman Catholic clergy saw with alarm that their numbers were steadily growing less.

"If such things are allowed," they said, "it will not be long before the entire couuntry will be Protestant."

Emissaries were at once sent to Turin, and a few weeks later appeared the following edict:

"Having labored, by all possible means, for the extermination of heresy, in order to the glory of God and the salvation of souls, we are grieved to learn that, in the Marquisate of Saluzzo, the people whom we have prohibited from the exercise of their worship in other places, should be permitted to promulgate their heresies, and thus prove a snare to the faithful; to prevent the furtherance of this evil, we ordain that all the adherents of the pretended reformed religion, whether born in the country or only settled in it, immediately to embrace the Catholic faith, or to leave our dominions, under pain of death."

Upon the proclamation of this edict, the Vaudois drew up a declaration, in order to make known the causes of this proscription.

"Let all men know, that it is not for any crime or rebellion that we are this day deprived of our property and our abodes. This happens by reason of an edict of abjuration or exile, which his royal highness, deceived, no doubt, by false reports, has issued against us. But our forefathers and our families having been brought up in the doctrine professed at this day by the Reformed Church, we are resolved to live and die in it. And, therefore, we declare and affirm that this doctrine which they

would prohibit to us, is held by us to be the only true doctrine, the only doctrine approved of God, and the only doctrine able to conduct us in the way of salvation. And if any one pretend that we are in error, far from being obstinate in defending it, we profess ourselves ready immediately to abjure it, upon our being convinced by the word of God. But if it is attempted by mere force and constraint to make us change our belief, we prefer rather to renounce all that we have, yea, even our lives, rather than the salvation of our souls.

These noble and courageous words ought to have gained for the proscribed all the sympathy of generous minds. But they exasperated still more the Romish clergy, and led them to adopt measures that would harass and irritate, if not destroy.

The Countess of Solaro had suffered much from illness, and by the time she reached Lucerna she was unable to leave her bed. Hence it was left for Octavia and Blanche to care for the wants of the household as well as their small means would allow. Arnaud still remained with them, and the three lads used their opportunities to do what they could, still blessing God for his goodness, and thankful, most of all, that they were still permitted to dwell together.

One evening, when Octavia had been reading to the Countess, and had closed her book, in order to watch in silence the setting of the sun, a woman entered with a child in her arms. The sight of so many strange faces caused the child to cry, when Octavia, reaching out her arms, promised him a song. Immediately the baby came to her, and beginning to sing, she soon had him fast asleep. The mother was grateful.

"It has done him good, and it has done me good," she said. "May we come again, and will you sing for us?" she asked.

"You may come, and I will sing for you," was the reply.

"But are you not afraid?" was asked.

"Why should I be afraid?" Octavia asked, in return. "The Bible tells us that we should sing when our hearts are heavy."

"That is a right word," answered the woman, "and I know it. Only sometimes my heart is so heavy that I cannot sing."

"Then you shall come to us," said Octavia, "for is it not written, 'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ?'"

"I perceive that you are Vaudois," said the woman, bursting into tears. "At first I was afraid

to come; but when I learned that some of you were sick, and the place strange to you, I felt that I must come."

After this, the woman brought her friends; and the night found them listening to the Count or to Octavia, while the Countess, pillowed in her chair, with a smile around her pale lips, and her hands clasped, listened silently. The brothers of the Count were widely scattered. At times Arnaud brought word of them.

"It is hard. I cannot deny that it is hard," he would say, as new troubles rolled up in angry waves to engulph them.

"Not as hard for us as it was for the Lord. We must comfort ourselves with this, Arnaud. The Master had not where to lay his head. It is not yet as bad with us as this"—Octavia would answer, hoping thus to encourage the old huntsman.

"I am not without thinking of these things, and I know God can write straight on crooked lines; but the bitter is still bitter. When from the other side we look at it, it will be different, however;" and a look of triumph brightens the rugged face, and again Arnaud busies himself in the service of those for whom he has so long had to care.

Upon one occasion, as they were lighting the

torches, Arnaud came from the forest bringing a brace of wood ducks, and utterly weary.

"What beauties!" exclaimed Blanche. "A pity almost to kill them"—passing her fingers over the curiously mottled plumage.

"Better than to have you starve," was said, in a voice that showed irritation.

Blanche looked up with a little hurt expression.

"Bless you, girl! there was no intention to hurt you. I was thinking of something else, something that troubled me; and you will think no more about it"—he hastened to say.

"Of course I knew you did not mean it. I was foolish," cried Blanche, and so joyously that tears came into the man's eyes.

"What is it—what has happened?" asked Octavia, making a way for the huntsman to escape observation; provided that he had anything to say of a nature he did not care for all to hear.

"It is Blanche," he said, tremblingly. "They claim her; but they cannot claim her. And I made bold to say as much."

"How claim Blanche?" asked Octavia, not quite comprehending what had so moved the huntsman.

"They say her mother was a Roman Catholic, and

that she is a De Rovera. And they asked me if that was not her name? And her uncle was a bishop, and she is related to Julius II., they said. And this is the reason they can claim her," he exclaimed, almost fiercely.

"We will speak to the Count of this," returned Octavia, with a touch of repressed feeling. "It will be well, perhaps, to make no allusion to it before Blanche and the Countess," she observed.

"No, truly not. But I have my eyes open. Let me not find them prowling around here. Blanche is no Roman Catholic," came with persisted energy.

Without having the right to open places of worship, the inhabitants of the town had the privilege of going to the homes of their brethren, and of celebrating family worship, in their own houses. They even had it in their power to send for the pastors in case of sickness, or in order to the funeral service of one of their own religion. In this way they soon became acquainted with the exiles, and their influence, like a flame, brightening as it goes, again brought upon them the ill will of those who could not endure the spread of gospel truth among the people.

One day some young people were apprehended on their way to Pignerol. It was thought that

Blanche de Rovera was one of them. When it was discovered that she was not, they were released on some simple plea that failed to satisfy those most interested in this young girl's welfare. Subsequently Count Solaro was waylaid, and his life would have been taken, but for the prompt assistance of Arnaud and the young sons of the Count, with their arquebuses in their hands.

"We must give them to understand that we are able to defend ourselves, or we must seek another home," said the huntsman, on his return. "And for myself I prefer the former."

"We must not shed blood," said the Count, "if it is possible to escape doing so. In every man, however base he may be, we behold one for whom Christ died. Our Lord pardoned a reviler with his dying breath. As he taught, so must we do."

"It is the right spirit. I sometimes wonder if I have it," said the huntsman, shaking his head. "I try to feel kindly. I think I will; but the next minute I hear of some of their wrong conduct, and the sorrow and the suffering they inflict upon others; and my heart hardens, and I could do by them as they do by others."

"God is our avenger. He will repay," said

Octavia. And her words, like oil on the troubled waters, brought peace.

The fires of persecution were lighted, however. New annoyances were commenced against the Vaudois. A petition was sent to the Duke of Savoy. The Duke replied that he would look into the matter. There was nothing he desired more than to see his subjects contented But those who surrounded him were less noble, less just. The Inquisition threatened. Every now and then travelers or foreign merchants were surprised on their journeys, and cast into dungeons, where they often remained without being heard of more. The Countess of Cardes suffered death rather than deny her faith. The estate of the Baroness of Termes was given to a Roman Catholic, and she was exiled. Chilled with this intelligence, and saddened with the thought of voluntary separation, Count Solaro was arrested, with several other gentlemen of rank, and conveyed to the Castle of Villafranca, after which nothing more was heard of them.

Urgent solicitations were addressed to the Count of Lucerna, from whom none but evasive answers could be obtained. A petition was then sent to the Duke. A person of noble birth offered his inter-

vention with the sovereign. It was accepted; they set out and came to Turin.

"I have a friend in great favor at court," said their new protector; "intrust me with your petition to show it to him, and I promise you his support."

The petition was given up, but not returned. The Vaudois demanded it.

"You cannot have it without some outlay on your part," was the reply, at the same time stipulating an amount of money it would be impossible for them to pay. Future efforts were made, with no better issue. And, at last, it was said that the prisoners had been transferred to another castle, leaving their friends ignorant of even the place where they were incarcerated.

CHAPTER IX.

A SOLEMN COVENANT.

IN order to escape the troubles that threatened them, the Vaudois families made haste to gather together the things most indispensable for subsistence, and to retire with their flocks to the fastnesses of the high mountains. The pastors everywhere redoubled their zeal and fervor. The religious assemblies were never more largely attended. There was an especial service of fasting and prayer. After these solemnities, an extraordinary celebration of the Lord's Supper took place, which united all the persecuted flock in one act of holy fellowship with their persecuted Lord.

"Thus without fear or weakness, but encouraging one another, did these poor people," we are told, "prepare with incredible resolution and cheerfulness to receive from the hand of God all the afflictions to which it might seem good to him to subject them. Nothing was to be heard from vale to mountain but the psalms and hymns of those who transported the sick, the aged, the women and

children, to the securest retreats of the rocks; so that for days nothing was to be seen but people passing and repassing on these rugged paths, diligently bearing luggage and little articles of furniture, as in the summer time the ants incessantly run and travel hither and thither, storing away provisions against the evil days; and among these worthy people none regretted his property, so resolute were they to await patiently all the pleasure of God."

The advice of their pastors had been, not to defend themselves by weapons of war, but merely to retire to a place where they might be safe from attack.

Their precautions did not save them, however; for soldiers were sent to hunt them down without mercy. The Vaudois confined themselves to the plateaus of the mountains. Many of them had only slings and cross-bows for defence.

The enemy ascended. Evening was come. The Vaudois halted on the summit of the Costieres, toward Rochemanaut. The enemy paused, and kindled their bivouac fires. The mountaineers fell on their knees, to give God thanks and to renew their prayers. Voluntarily allowing themselves to be first attacked by their adversaries, that they

might not, even in a single instance, be the aggressors, they firmly awaited them on the rocks, from which a hail storm of stones and balls soon repulsed the assailants. But the latter returned to the charge. The Vaudois resisted them; the combatants became furious; the more disciplined troops regained the advantage; when suddenly there arrived from the heights of La Fontanelle fresh combatants, by whom a portion of that troop had already been repulsed. They joined their brethren, who soon again had the best of the combat. The enemy gave way and disbanded; and the Vaudois pursued the fugitives, who uttered cries and imprecations on those who had caused their rout.

Hardly had these brave men had time to confer together, before a re-inforcement of soldiers came up from La Torre, who took the Vaudois in the rear. Thus beset, these brave mountaineers faced to both sides, forming into two bodies, of which one engaged the new-comers, while the other completed the rout of the first assailants. This done, the two bodies re-united, and, rushing at once upon their adversaries, passed through the lines, without leaving one of their number in their hands.

The next day a letter was received from the commander of the soldiers, in which he stated that he

was greatly grieved by what his soldiers had done. "It was a mistake," he admitted; and concluded by proposing an arrangement.

"As to an arrangement, if it has for its object to convince us of error, by discussion and not by arms, we willingly agree to it; but if it be meant, that we should sacrifice in it the honor of God and the salvation of our souls, it is better for us to die all together, rather than consent to it."

At the same time when they sent off this reply, the Vaudois, readily foreseeing what reception it would meet with, sent a messenger to their friends of Pragela, to entreat them to come to their aid.

Notwithstanding his words, Count La Trinité did not feel obliged to keep faith with heretics; for, while negotiations were going on, not only did his soldiers attack Villar and Tagliaretto, but, scaling the heights of Campo-la-Rama, they endeavored to cross the mountain which separates the valley of Lucerna from that of Angrogna, in order to gain the bottom of the latter, and then to seize upon the Pra-del-Tor, to which a great part of the Vaudois families had retired. These troops, having set fire to some barns, were observed, and were repulsed by a valiant combat.

Pra-del-Tor is the place where the ancient Vau-

dois had the school of their Barbas, the secret source of those vivifying missions which they sent to both extremities of Italy. It is not situated on a height, but in a deep recess among the mountains. It is the bottom of a valley, savage and austere as the peaks of the Alps, remote from observation, and free from bustle as a nook of the forest. The steep mountain slopes bring down into this deep dell the mad waters of the torrent of Angrogna, which escapes among the rocks. This verdant basin, surrounded with frightful precipices, seems a dark crater yawning at the feet of the traveler who views it from the lofty peaks, and looks like an oasis in the desert when he has descended into it. A difficult path which winds among and around the rocks is the only outlet by which visitors can enter, or depart from it.

The hearts of men are drawn together by a common danger. The valley of Pragela was threatened with the same calamities as the valley of Lucerna. Then took place one of those solemn and impressive scenes which sometimes elevate modern times to the level of the ages of antiquity, and which seem to be suited rather to poetry than to history—a scene at once heroic and religious, and, above all, grand in its simplicity.

Deputies from the Valley of Pelice went to that of Clusone, in order to renew before God the covenant that had always subsisted among the primitive churches of the Alps. This covenant was made by all the people assembled on a platform of snow, over against the mountains of Sestriéres and of the chain of Gunivert; where the Clusone takes its rise from the glaciers. The people of Pragela likewise sent delegates and pastors to the valley of Lucerna.

Not being able to follow the ordinary route, by reason of the troops which would have seized them, they traversed mountains rendered almost impassable by the snow which covered them; climbed an ascent, by which they reached Macello; and thence again ascending to Prali, crossed the Col Julian, in order to proceed to Bobi.

Upon their arrival they were met by a proclamation, issued the day preceding, to the effect that the inhabitants must, within twenty-four hours, go to mass; or endure all the penalties reserved for heretics—the stake, the galleys, the rock, the gibbet, and all the other corollaries of Roman Catholicism. This fatal term coincided precisely with the arrival of the pastors of Pragela. They had just arrived at Le Puy, a hamlet of the

commune of Bobi, situated on a verdant hill, covered with gigantic chestnuts, at a little distance from the latter village.

Without loss of time, the pastor, the elders, the deacons, and the members of the church in Bobi, and in the surrounding hamlets, mounted the hill to Le Puy, in order to make known to their newly-arrived friends, the sad extremity to which they were reduced; and there, after fervent prayer made to God for his counsel and assistance, an enthusiastic resolution was adopted that they should defend themselves unto death. From that moment dates the most glorious campaign which the heroic persecuted ever maintained against fanatical persecution.

The delegates of Pragela and of the valley of Lucerna, standing erect in the crowd, with seriousness that defies description, and voices firm and decisive, pronounced these solemn words:

"In the name of the Vaudois Churches of the Alps, of Dauphiny, and of Piedmont, which are all here united, and whose representatives we are, we here promise, with our hands upon the Bible and in the presence of God, that all our valleys will courageously stand by one another in what relates to religion, without prejudice to the obedience due

to their lawful superiors. We promise to maintain the Bible, entire and without admixture, according to the usuage of the true Apostolic Church, steadfastly continuing in this holy religion, although it should be at the peril of our lives, in order that we may be able to leave it to our children intact and pure, as we have received it from our fathers. We promise aid and success to our persecuted brethren, and not to regard individual interests, but the common cause, and not to wait upon men, but upon God."

The term allowed by this summons being already past, and the people not acceding to it, the garrison of Villar marched forth to make prisoners. The Vaudois met it on the way, repulsed the garrison, and pursued it even under the walls of Villar. The monks, the judges, the seigneurs, and the podestat, who had come thither in order to receive the abjuration of the heretics, had scarcely time to shut themselves up with the fugitive soldiers in the menaced fortress. The Vaudois laid siege to it, placed sentinels and posts of observation and defence, fortified themselves also in their turn, and awaited the progress of events.

The garrison of La Torre arrived in time to deliver the besieged; the Vaudois routed them in

the plain of Teynan. They returned in greater force, and underwent the same defeat. The siege lasted ten days. The Vaudois made powder for themselves, also mines, casemates, engines for throwing stones, and loopholes in the neighboring houses, in order to shooot over the bastions of the citadel.

The women were as enthusiastic as the men. Arnaud the huntsman made himself the leader of one of the parties; while Octavia and Blanche cared for the wounded, and stimulated the energies of the faint-hearted.

The garrison was speedily reduced to the last extremity. It was in want of provisions and of ammunition, and was obliged to knead bread with wine, for want of water. At last it surrendered, upon condition that the lives of the soldiers should be spared, and that safe conduct should be given them.

This advantage of the Vaudois caused the Count La Trinité to pause and to resolve upon disuniting them, in order to destroy them more easily.

To this effect he sent them promises of peace; but these not having the effect to scatter them, he brought up all his forces, and availed himself of all the resources of strategy. His endeavor was to

surprise Pra-del-Tor. This citadel of the Alps was defended, not only by its rocks, but also by heroic combatants. An attempt was made to enter it by Tagliaretto, but the company of Villar maintained that passage. The troops advanced in three columns, intending to make each an assault at the same time. The winding of the ravines, and the intricacies of the rocks prevented this. The guides got entangled and lost. And, at last, they were completely thrown into confusion, and defeated.

"Kill them! kill them!" cried the Vaudois, excited with the ardor of victory.

"To your knees! to your knees!" exclaimed the pastor. "Let us give thanks to the God of armies, for the success which he has just granted us."

To avenge this defeat the soldiers burned the houses of Rosa, the families of which place did not retire till after a long and vigorous resistance.

To attain a place of refuge in the valley of Lucerna, these poor fugitives had to go by the mountain of Brouard, which was, at that time, covered with snow. Night overtook them. They were opposite to Villar; but still at a distance from it, though they saw its lights shining on the other side of the valley. Their cries, however, were heard;

torches were kindled, and their brethren came to meet them. Friendly voices responded to theirs. The cries of distress were soon changed into accents of joy and deliverance; sufferers had met with one another, and the outlawed had found brethren.

There was a break in the cloud; but the storm was not spent.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE HEIGHTS.

DURING the troublesome times narrated in the last chapter, the Countess and her sons were not separated; while Octavia and Blanche, from following up the contests, were frequently far from each other. In this way, opportunities had offered for each to speak words of comfort and cheer to those of their own faith with whom they came in contact. And not only this; but not a few of the Roman Catholic families, lamenting the injustice, and commiserating the suffering, on every side, were led to question the purity of a church that scrupled not to use such measures, in order to sustain her bulwarks.

There was danger in this, however; and as soon as the war cloud opened sufficiently for a rift of light to show through, the heroic girls, dressed as the peasants of the country, began their march, in order to rejoin the Countess.

The Countess and her boys had found shelter in a hut overshadowed by chestnut trees, and with a

ravine near, precipitous in many places, and with a tangle of vines and dwarfed growth of trees that rendered it a place of comparative safety when danger threatened. In this retreat, the Countess had passed many days, when her sons had been sent out by Arnaud, in order to make sure of the position of the enemy.

To this hut the young girls made their way; treading the steep paths at night, incommoded by rolling stones, and tearing their garments, and bruising their hands in their efforts to advance.

"I was to go for you," said Claude to Octavia, as, weary and well nigh exhausted, she appeared before him. "We are no longer to remain in the hut. There is danger. Arnaud has just come to warn us."

Faint and hungry, tears came into the beautiful eyes, and the next instant were dashed aside. Arnaud had been in the hottest of the contest; she must not let him see how weak and foolish she was. Blanche was equally guarded.

"God has watched over us in all our ways, and he will care for us," was said, cheerfully.

"And we are together," answered Octavia.

As soon as they were rested a little, Arnaud hurried them away.

The moon was hidden behind a bank of gray clouds, and the path was by no means even. The bleating of a lamb was heard as they passed a small fold, and Evrard, the youngest of the lads, turned beseechingly to the huntsman for permission to go back and say "good-by" to Lavit, the little guardian of the flock.

"It will take time, and the soldiers may be even now upon our track; for your mother's sake, lad, we must not stop," was the reply.

The Countess was not strong, and the stones pierced her feet, and led her to stumble in her walk. After midnight a light was seen. As it gleamed out, although far away, it was hailed with delight. Then another was seen, and finally, a long, uneven line of brilliant points. Full well Arnaud understood the meaning of the lights; and grateful that they had been in time, he hurried the small party forward without exciting their fears. Climbing over the rocks, they came to a grotto, or cavern, that showed signs of having been used as a habitation.

"We will rest here," said the huntsman. And at the same time he struck two stones together and made a light. A quantity of moss and leaves already occupied one side of the cavern, and a jar

of water had every appearance of being recently filled.

To be sure that it was not an ambush, Arnaud surveyed the place cautiously, then finding nothing to arouse suspicion, begged the Countess to rest; while Octavia brought forth the remnant of a black loaf and some dried grapes, that had been given her by the people from whom she had parted, and filling a flask with water from the jar, their table was spread.

"Give God thanks," said Arnaud, posting himself behind the Countess.

The latter glanced over to Octavia.

The words were simple; such as children use to thank their father for favors unexpectedly given them.

With the simple repast finished, Arnaud wandered farther away, to see if danger lurked in the rocks by which they were surrounded. When he returned the day was drawing near, and considering the state they were in, he determined to watch while the rest should sleep. Octavia saw that this was needful for the Countess; and with gentle persuasiveness she prevailed upon her to leave herself in the keeping of God, and rest as a tired child rests on the bosom of its mother.

"He will not fail us," she said, sweetly. "When it is dark, he will see for us. And he it is who can scatter our enemies."

Blanche, likewise, and the lads laid down to slumber, feeling that the hand over them was love. When all was at rest, Octavia went out to Arnaud, and discussed the route they must take, and the possibility of finding out where the Count was imprisoned.

"If we take the direction of St. Martin," said Arnaud, "we must go by the way of Col-du-Lis—the most difficult route; but the safest, perhaps."

"If God has spared him, Valerio may be there, and Bartholomew. The hope of meeting them will give us all courage," was the reply.

"To undertake such a journey, requires rest," said the huntsman, with that peculiar quality of voice that denotes responsibility.

More to please the kind-hearted man, than from any desire to sleep, Octavia entered the cavern, and threw herself down on the soft moss. When she opened her eyes, she was surprised to find the sun sifting through a crevice in the rock, and Blanche already awake. The sound of voices awoke the Countess, and starting up with a low cry:

"Have they followed us?" she asked.

"They would have found it difficult to do that, your grace," answered the huntsman, who himself had not taken a wink of sleep.

"Was the path really so hard to keep? I felt that it was," she continued.

"Do you feel able for another clamber over the rocks? Possibly we can stop on the way. There are views among the mountains that will repay us for making the ascent," said Arnaud—not without a swift glance into the pale face of the lady who was doing her best not to break down.

"I have slept, and I am refreshed; and with the light we can pick our way," was said, cheerfully.

A few grapes, and a cup of water, was all that they could allow themselves.

"We may find some small game," said Arnaud; "and with the bread, we can then make a meal."

It was a prudent arrangement; and the lads pulled at the grapes, and quaffed the water with a satisfaction that went far to encourage their mother.

The sun was rounded out and full when they turned their backs upon the cavern. Octavia was the first to step out into the fresh morning air. It was both aromatic and exhilarating. She breathed in full draughts. She gazed around her with delight.

"So much of God up here!" she breathed out.

Blanche and the Countess were filled with a peculiar desire to carry away such a picture of the scene as would enable them to recall it at any time. Below them, soft, gray clouds were floating, the gray changing into gold, and then tinged by a flash of red, spreading ever higher and higher; while far in the distance, like a dark immeasurable flood, all still lay in gloom. Now, however, rugged heights and broad mountain ridges began to emerge; other summits were free, but their bases still lay in gloom, which was fast changing into soft, grayish tints. More glowing and more widely spreading became the rosy flush on the sky, and more and more boldly the giant mountains stood forth, bathed in purple and gold.

"So much of God up here!" whispered Octavia.

"So much of God," was the echo; and the spell was broken.

As the little party advanced, an antelope, that was grazing near the path, raised her head, and then bounded away. Claude drew his bow to his shoulder.

"Not now, lad!" said the huntsman. "Possibly we may come upon another, and a cup of milk will be refreshing."

Birds were flying through the air, and glittering vapors rose from trees and grass. Beautiful as it was, there was a chill; the Countess felt it, a blue line showed under her eyes, and her teeth chattered.

"We must walk faster," said the huntsman. "It will warm the blood, and when the sun climbs higher we can rest and look about us."

While Arnaud was rejoiced to find that Octavia could forget the destruction that threatened them, in her reverence and admiration of the works of God, he trembled in view of the delay; hence his efforts to hasten, without arousing useless fear.

As the day advanced, the paths grew more intricate; while the winds whistled around them, and a cold, drizzling rain set in. A halt was called, and the poor Countess sunk fainting to the ground. Perplexed, they were not discouraged.

"The hand of God is in it!" said Arnaud. "We are not to go further this day." And at once he began to seek a place of shelter for the night. After searching carefully for a sheltering rock, or cavern, he returned with a brightened countenance. A few steps found them descending by a series of broad, natural steps into a little dell, walled in on three sides, and festooned with vines, the roots of which were fastened in the soil above.

to-day. I will learn how to make cakes. I will be useful."

"Like the Lord, going about doing good," said Octavia, smiling through tears.

"Not that I am sure of doing well. It is a trial, and at any moment something may come to drive us from our hiding place," continued the Countess.

"I do not think that our thoughts should run in this channel. God is able and willing to give us the best things. He will not let us slip from his hand," returned Octavia.

"If one could only remain in the possession of one's best. But I very often grow depressed, and feel myself forsaken and helpless. I have daily tried to overcome this feeling," begun the Countess.

"And the earnest effort to overcome will bring victory," said Octavia. "We do not reach the heights at a bound. And the delight makes us forget the weariness of the way."

"I am to try. I am to begin to-day," said the Countess, with emphasis.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HUNTSMAN TAKES HIS DEPARTURE.

"WINTER is coming earlier than usual," Andrew said, as he came from the vineyard, with three clusters of luscious grapes in his hand. At once he laid them before the Countess.

"You are welcome to as many as you like, only these are the nicest. They grew so high, and they have had the sun. I had to climb to get them."

The Countess would rather not have received the grapes; but she knew, in that case, Andrew would feel hurt. So she thanked him for giving her the best, and said that she had once read of a way to keep grapes fresh, and she would try and think of it; such delicious clusters in the winter would be a great treat.

"As it is, we have to dry them," said Andrew. "We will begin to heat the ovens to-morrow, and when they are dried, they can be packed away."

The Countess was taking more interest in the house, and in the surroundings. Arnaud had gone into the valley, and he was one to understand

things. He would learn, without exchanging many words, what the governor was thinking of, and what he was about to do. She had not before thought that she could live without Arnaud; now she was rejoiced to have him away.

Cold winds swept the heights, and the sunshine on the rocks had a faint, white light. Leaves whisked through the air — purple and red and brown and gold—filling the paths and fluttering up to the windows, like birds mutely asking shelter and warmth. There were days when the clouds massed, and then broke and rolled away, like ships with great black hulls, driven and tossed by the winds.

It required all Octavia's strength now to climb over the rocks and keep the path to the hamlet. Sometimes there was sleet and snow in the air, and as it fell it congealed; and, when the sun came out, the rocks were dazzlingly white, and she had to slip along without daring to raise her feet.

On such days the lambs were not suffered to leave the fold. Even Mina, who found it difficult to keep quiet, was forced to content herself with just a scamper up to the door, for the sake of eating from the hand of the Countess. Evrard had a great love for Mina.

"It is right for me to think more of Mina than I do of either of the others," he would say. "If Mina had not run away that day, what would have become of us? And now I am to be kind to her; and every morning you must keep something of the best you have"—looking brightly into his mother's face.

Every day Claude and Louis went to the wood and collected faggots for the winter fires; while the gathering of the people in the hamlet for religious worship was not forgotten by Andrew and Octavia.

"It was his last word," Andrew said to Octavia, referring to Lentulus. "He said, that you could get to the hamlet, and you would do it. And I must see that the paths were kept open. It's now, perhaps, more than at other seasons, when the people like to hear a good word. I have often seen how they brightened a bit when you read to them—especially the sick ones. It's different shut up in their houses—and some of them are smoky, and there's a cold, cheerless look—to what it is when they can get out on the rocks, and the sun shines brightly; and it is all so wonderful, and so easy to think of God."

Octavia turned with a smile. It was a long

speech for Andrew to make, and evidently he was speaking from his own experience.

"Doubtless it is harder for the people," she said to herself, as Andrew seemed to think that he had been too free, perhaps, and lapsed into silence. And thus her visits were more frequent and tender; thoughtful words more lovingly dropped into their hearts, just when the gloom was the deepest.

Andrew Monteil was likewise a wood-carver.

"I cannot do this," Octavia said, as she followed him with her eyes, and saw how dexterously he used his knife. "Do you sell them?" she asked, as she examined the pretty carvings he brought forth, as some that he had done previously.

"I used to sell them before these terrible times came upon us. Now the colayers exchange them for us when they can, without being robbed by our enemies."

Susanna had always a good word.

"It is something to be thankful for, a good home and a good fire. Then the carvings come in, and the flames leap up, and something within me keeps singing, 'The great God is so good to me!' And I fold my babies in my arms, and look long at the fire, and think that the lambs are all sheltered, and the people in the hamlet are not any of them sick;

and there sits Andrew, the best man in the world. And I am his wife."

Octavia knew how to listen. It was different with the Countess; and so it had been arranged that a fire should be put into the mother's room, and the lady could have her own family quite to herself when she liked.

The wood-carving always led to pleasant discourse. With Octavia for a listener, Andrew related many incidents of the time when he learned to fashion the wood; the trees he sought out; and the long walks he had taken in order to select the proper color and quality; following the grain and designing; and at last polishing and giving a fine finish.

"It is the way God leads us, I think"—lifting himself a little from his work. "He just gives us the things to do with, and then we must work it out. Such a thought of his love comes to me at times; especially in the spring, when the grass shows itself on the rocks, and the sheep take to the heights. Mina is always quick to go, and many is the time I have watched to see her turn around and look and bleat, and expect me to follow. I think it's the confidence she puts in me. And all the time she is running away."

These were new thoughts for Octavia. This man, whose life had been passed in the mountains, could analyze and understand many things that others failed to learn. Where did he get such wisdom? Who had been his teacher?

Susanna did not carve. When her children were asleep and warmly tucked in bed, she drew her chair still nearer her husband and began to knit.

"I never used to knit," she said, to Octavia. "I had a mother to do that; you should see her stockings. I will show them to you some day; and they wore well and were warm. As long as one has a mother to knit, there is comfort. Andrew knows that I try. But I cannot do just as mother could."

The carving was going on, and Susanna sitting near, was knitting silently. Octavia found the wood hard, and her knife slipped.

"It is not wise to do any more to night," said Susanna. "When the knife slips, it is a bad sign; and the best thing is to put it up."

"What is it a sign of?" asked Octavia.

"I will knit into the middle of my seam needle, and then I will put up my work; mother used always to do so. Knit to the middle of the seam needle and then fold up your work," was the

woman's reply, without seeming to notice the question asked.

Before the knitting and the carving was put aside, steps were heard on the frozen snow, and a muffled knocking followed on the outer door. Andrew hastened to open it. A man stood there muffled in a huge bear skin, but whether friend or enemy, he could not say.

"I lost my way, I think, and the goods went rolling down the precipice, and I had something for you"—was said in a familiar voice.

"It is Jacob the colayer!" cried Susanna. "Come in, Jacob"—running forward and drawing the colayer inside. "Who would have thought of your losing your way? Take his coat, Andrew, and let him feel the fire; fire is a good thing for him."

Octavia had run away with the first sound of the stranger's voice. She was afraid the Countess would hear the knocking and be alarmed. Then possibly it was Arnaud; or was it? Her heart was beating violently. A moment she leaned against the door; then opened it and went in, with all her old, quiet, unobtrusive manner. The Countess had not heard anything; neither had the others. Claude had been reading aloud. They were now sitting carelessly and gazing into the fire.

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Octavia spoke of her carving, and said that the knife had slipped; adding with a smile:

"Susanna said it was a bad sign."

"A bad sign!" exclaimed the Countess.

"Susanna always has a sign for everything. Of course, some of them must be bad signs," said Octavia, laughing.

"There is not much in a sign. Do you think there is much in a sign?" asked Evrard.

"I do not believe in signs; but to listen gives pleasure to Susanna, and it does not harm us," was the reply.

"I have noticed that the people are alike in this," added Louis. "I stumbled on the threshold the other day. Mark said if I had been going out of the hut, instead of coming in, it would have been a bad sign."

The Countess was not superstitious; but the conversation recalled to her remembrance certain of her dreams about Arnaud since he left the mountains, and timidly she repeated one that had made a deep impression upon her mind, and of which she had not before spoken.

"Doubtless you fell asleep thinking of him," Octavia ventured to say, seeing that Evrard was drinking in every word.

"It was so, I think; and naturally I dreamed of him. But such things are not pleasant. I cannot say that I quite like them."

It was late. Octavia had not mentioned the arrival of the stranger. It was better, perhaps, that she should not. Still, there was a hope that Arnaud might be heard from; and dropping her knife carelessly, she took advantage of the fact of its point piercing the hard flooring and standing erect to say:

"Susanna's sign for a stranger to appear. Let us sleep, and dream that a stranger is coming with no ill news for us," she said.

The voice was bright and animated. The "good-night" was full of promised rest.

CHAPTER XIII.

ARNAUD HEARD FROM.

SUSANNA piled on fresh faggots, and Andrew helped Jacob off with his bear-skin coat; although so chilled and half-frozen was the man, that he could not speak for the chattering of his teeth. The fire crackled and hissed, and went roaring up the chimney. Andrew was for leaving the colayer to sleep; but Susanna said nothing could be worse. She had often heard her mother say, that when one is cold and frozen he must not sleep.

"First we must give him hot tea. I have it in the pitcher, and it will soon be ready," she said. "Then we must rub him into a glow, and after that he will sleep."

"In that case we will begin," said Andrew, "for it looks to me as if sleep was coming along on a hundred feet."

Susanna had a way of keeping people awake. She now began to chatter like a magpie.

"So you lost your way, Jacob! A strange thing

for one who has been here before," she said, laughing heartily as she spoke.

"I lost the path, I should have said," answered the man, beginning to feel the effect of the rubbing.

"The path! That is more like it. I am glad you thought of us. The head-forester's house is still here. He is not here; only Peter, the woodman, is left to see to things. You are to go there, perhaps."

"Not this time," replied the man.

"And you have things for us?" asked Susanna, not at all troubled at the man's disinclination to speak of himself.

In spite of the fire and the rubbing and the hot drink, Jacob was half asleep, and feeling about for his pack.

"Now I remember, it rolled down the precipice. I saw it, and I tried to go after it, and my limbs were stiff, and——" dropping off to sleep.

The next morning it was a late hour before the colayer could rouse himself. Meantime, Andrew had slid down the precipice, and, by the aid of ropes, pulled by Claude and Louis, standing in the path above, the poor man's pack was brought to him.

While they were doing this, the colayer was

eating his breakfast, and at the same time talking as glibly with Susanna as she could have wished.

"I saw him, and he said I would find them here. And he gave me a letter," said Jacob, while he swallowed a cup of black coffee and ate the cakes with a relish.

"Now you are talking in riddles. Who was it that you met, and whom did you think to find here? Speak out! We are plain, free spoken folks."

"Of course! of course! I mean no offence," was said, humbly.

"Then you have nothing for us?" Susanna asked, with a little hurt look creeping over her face.

"I didn't say that, and I didn't mean it. I have something for the last carvings, and I have a letter for some folks in your house. I think it is the one I saw last night. I was so cold. But I saw her, and she's not like another. He said she was not like another."

"I know! my mother used to say it takes a woman to know, and you have been so long getting it out. It is Arnaud, the huntsman, you've seen, and you've brought a letter. Octavia will be glad, and so will the Countess."

"Yes, that's the name, Octavia. I did my very best to think of it. Now I'll repeat it, Octavia, and you'll forgive the blunder," glancing appealingly into the woman's face.

Before she could answer, Andrew came through the door and set the merchant's pack down beside the fire.

"Now we shall have it!" exclaimed Susanna.

"It!" said Andrew, laughing.

"It's a letter, and it's for Octavia, and will make them all happy, I hope."

The lads had heard enough. There was a letter. Arnaud was still living. There had been a contest. The colayer had been in it, and now he was here.

"It was this way," the colayer began. "The order was that all the Bibles must be burned; and if one should be found in any house after such a time, the house should be burned, and the people who persisted should be sent to the galleys. The soldiers attacked us; the huntsman made himself leader; we drew them into a narrow defile; and the rocks being slippery from a late fallen snow, we were able to defeat them. And what is better, the Bibles they did not find; for we had them hidden away in the rocks; and after the fight, although we

had gained the victory, we did not think it best to leave them there. Thus it was that I ventured to bring them up with the goods," he said; "and to lose them, as I did last night, made me feel almost as though God had forsaken me."

"But he had not; he never does; you are here!" cried Susanna, drying her eyes on her apron at the same time. "If the pack had fallen where you could have reached it, you would have frozen, perhaps. No! God never forsakes us; one must never at any time say that."

The letter consisted of fragments; names of persons who had suffered tortures inflicted, and others who had been sent to prison. Octavia prepared to listen to Jacob. The Countess was already in tears, and Blanche had heard names called, and knew that many of her old companions chose to suffer rather than deny their faith.

"God has been good to us, and we are here," she whispered to the Countess.

There was no reply. Arnaud had gone out to find some clue with regard to the Count. He had found none. It was evident he had yet found none.

"I think we should be thankful that Jacob got through. It was no easy thing," said Andrew.

"And Arnaud is alive, and it is no worse with us than it was," ventured Claude.

"But our father!" said Evrard, who could not longer contain himself.

"We must wait," whispered Octavia, not daring to trust herself to say more.

A bit of parchment fell to the floor. The lad sprang to pick it up.

"It is closely written," he said to Octavia.

"Yes," she answered, letting her eyes run over the parchment, while a ghastly pallor settled over her features.

"You remember our old friend, Francis Carde?" she asked, as if to give herself time to speak firmly.

"Certainly we remember him, and his aunt, the Countess. Did he share in the misfortunes attending the house of Carde?" Blanche asked, anxiously.

"As the protégé of the Duke of Savoy, he was able to escape for a time; but Rome has means, and treachery devised a way. Our poor friend was broken on the wheel," continued Octavia, in a voice full of emotion.

A low sobbing filled the room. Susanna was the first to speak:

An exclamation of surprise burst from each of the small group.

"Why need we be troubled! God cares for us," said Octavia.

"Still, we are troubled; and every time, I think I never will be again," answered Blanche. "God does not make the bridge till we arrive at the river."

"He knows when we try," said Evrard, the youngest of the Count's sons. "My father told me that many times."

The allusion to the Count drew tears from the eyes of the Countess. To divert his mother, Claude began to examine the rocks, raising the vines, and in some places dislodging small stones. Presently, he cried out:

"Look! What an ample chamber."

With vines drawn back in his hands, like a curtain let down from above, he stoood to let them pass. They were standing in a large mural chamber, dimly lighted from an orifice above—rather, several orifices—the light coming down, giving the effect of stars. Surprise and awe filled their hearts. There was no word, or cry. Then dropping to their knees, with uncovered heads, silent prayer was offered.

After this, leaves were scraped up, and such moss as they could gather. Early in the day, some small birds had been snared. These were roasted; and with the remnant of black bread, a meal was furnished. The fire sent a measure of warmth through the chamber. The Countess slept; and, on wakening, was able to rise.

"I think we should go on," she said.

"Not to-night," returned the huntsman. "God, who brought us here, will not let us starve."

"We could do very well, if we had a goat from Lavit's flock," said Evrard.

"We saw one yesterday, and we may find one to-day," said Octavia. Then pressing up to the huntsman: "Why not live here?" she whispered. "Here there is peace. I begin to forget the suffering through which we have come."

"It is possible that we may find a hamlet if we go still further. To find food here and to rely upon game would be perilous. Besides, soldiers can climb," he said, at the same time sending a furtive glance in the direction of the opening.

The lads, meanwhile, made a snare, and then flung themselves down on the short herbage to watch it. Presently a hare shot across the path and escaped.

"There must be another!" cried Evrard, a little disturbed at the idea of losing his supper.

Arnaud's suggestion that soldiers could climb, produced a feeling of danger in Octavia's breast. Thinking it cruel to alarm the Countess, however, she made a feint of finding a flower said to grow on the heights, and in this way kept watch without the fear of being questioned.

Before the darkness set in, the lads came running to say that they had heard a lamb bleating. Arnaud went with them. They did not find any trace, neither could they again hear the bleating.

Octavia clung to the rock, so that she seemed only a part of it, and gave herself up to quiet reflection. It was the same sun sinking to rest, that she had seen rise in the morning. He had made his journey, and now he was to sink behind the horizon, only to rise on the other side. Countless human beings had seen him, as he made his splendid course, and countless others, incarcerated in prisons and noisome dungeons, had longed just for one ray of sunshine to light their gloom. In thinking of her brothers, especially the Count, of whose fate she was still ignorant, it seemed that she must speak aloud.

"God made the sun and hung it in the blue

arch. It rises and sets. We are the creatures of his hand. He made us. More than this, his Son died for us. We are his. What a comforting assurance! His grasp is strong; neither can any one pluck us from his hand."

A soft, gray film was creeping up from the depths below. A sea of molten gold was supported on the distant horizon; and in the midst of this sea was a flashing orb.

"Thus day sinks into the arms of night! and we fade into eternity," she whispered.

At that instant, a man's head was lifted above an opposite rock, and the next a shepherd's crook was planted upon the shallow earth above, and without manifest fear, he stood erect but a few yards from the young girl.

Assured that it was not a soldier, Octavia accosted him frankly. The sound of voices brought Arnaud. The man gave his name — Andrew Monteil. He was living in a hut not far away. One of his sheep had escaped, and he was come up the heights to find it.

"God be praised!" cried Arnaud. "You are Vaudois, and you live here quietly?"

"Thus far God has kept us; while our brethren have suffered," was the reply.

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The lads came to say that they had heard a lamb bleating; but could not find it. With Arnaud and the lads, Andrew proceeded along the ledges calling his sheep by name, and, whistling at intervals, a slow, pitiful air. Presently an answering cry was heard, followed by an unmistakable bleat. The sheep was found wedged between two rocks, where it was impossible for it to free itself.

The shepherd was in raptures.

"It would have been such a death," he said. "And I have found it," dropping his words, and taking the lamb in his arms. "My little children cried when they learned that Mina had strayed from the fold. And now they will rejoice."

"If Mina had not strayed we should not have found you," said Octavia. "It was God's way of leading us."

"That is a true word," said the shepherd. "And now, if you can take up with our poor fare, you are welcome. We read the Book, and we bring up our two children to obey God."

Before they reached the hut, the shepherd's wife came out to meet them.

"Rejoice with me! I have found my sheep," said the shepherd; then, turning to the exiles, he

presented his family, and asked his wife's good offices for the strangers.

"You are welcome to such as we have," she said, dropping a curtesy, according to her habit. "Our fathers lived in the valley. When we were children they were driven here, rather than renounce their faith in God, and that form of worship which was theirs. Boudrina is a pretty hamlet, and is near us. You can see it by daylight," she said, pleasantly.

CHAPTER XI.

NEW FRIENDS ON THE MOUNTAIN.

THE hamlet of Boudrina, situated upon the ledges of projecting rocks, at the summit of a very steep slope, was not unlike the eyrie of an eagle in its approaches. With the first sunlight, the three lads, Claude, Louis, and Evrard, were awake, and anxious to know just how everything looked around the hut. They were so eager, that they could hardly wait for the huntsman to say to them that it was time to get up.

"I think we might venture to act for ourselves this time," said Louis. "Arnaud complained of his wound yesterday, and he was lame; anyway it hurt him, I know; only he would not say it."

"Then you should not say it either," answered Claude. "When one has the wish to hide anything, it is unkind to bring it into notice."

"I had not the wish to be unkind," returned Louis, with a little hurt feeling. "Only, that Arnaud might be inclined to rest a little later than

usual this morning, and we could venture out by ourselves."

"We can ask him!" exclaimed Claude, as the old hunter stood before them.

"Are you lame this morning?" asked Evrard, running up and seizing his hand.

"Not so lame but that I can venture to go on the rocks with you," was the good-natured reply.

"I would like to know if Andrew has more sheep than Lavit had. And Mina! Just think, if she had not run away yesterday!" said the lad, with a face full of seriousness.

The small fold was hedged in by a strong wall, and there were vines; and the vines made a vineyard; and there were props, and clusters of grapes could be plainly seen. For want of something else to say, Evrard asked if the grapes would ripen.

"They will ripen if left to themselves," said Arnaud, with a laugh.

"But they are so far up the mountain," came stoutly.

"The sun shines warmly on the ledges; that is just the place for grapes, I would say," exclaimed Louis.

"It is too near heaven for our enemies to find us. I wish my father was here," continued Evrard.

They were standing quite at the entrance of the enclosure before they discovered that Andrew and his wife were already at work there. The purple of the vineyard was broken by lances of glittering gold.

"A good morning," said Susanna, coming forward with her hands full of green leaves. "We made no noise, and the children I hushed to rest. We wanted you to sleep. Next to sunlight, sleep is the best thing the good God gives us," she added.

"We have slept, and it is day; and we want to see things," said Evrard.

The woman laughed heartily.

"It is always the way; children speak out when they want anything. It is a good way;" and she laughed, and showed her white, even teeth. Just then it struck Arnaud that Susanna was a very good-looking woman.

Octavia was standing in the door when they approached the hut, and behind her, the pale face of the Countess was seen. Blanche was in the act of throwing a blue shawl over her shoulders.

Susanna threw down the green leaves and hastened up the path.

"You have slept, and now you are awake," she said; "take care!" as they stepped over the thresh-

old. "Let your first look be to the east. My mother was a wise woman; the room at the end of the house, where you slept, was built for her. Every morning, her first look was to the east, and it was a blessing to her. And when she was sick, and too feeble to walk, Andrew carried her chair and set it so that her eyes could look to the east. It is a good thing; the day is always better when it begins in that way."

"I am sure you are right in this, and your mother was right," said Octavia. "To see the sun rise, is to see a new creation. It is beautiful. Everything is beautiful in the mountains."

Susanna even ventured to take the hand of the Countess.

"You are feverish! I was sure of it," she said, feelingly. "My mother understood about herbs. She told me the use of them; and we have them in the hut the year round. We are never sick."

Andrew came up with a smiling countenance.

"God has given us a good day," he said; "and you are up in time to see the sun as he comes from behind the mountain. It is a sight to make one think of God, and thank him too. There are people who never see the sun rise, and it makes them cruel."

Susanna had gone into the hut, but she soon came out and announced breakfast. The table was spread with flat cakes, just baked, and a kind of porridge made of dried grapes and flour. There were stools to sit on, and the Countess had the mother's chair. They stood around the table while Andrew asked a blessing; then took their places. The cakes were eaten with relish, and the porridge was so nice that the bowl had to be refilled.

"The next best thing to sleep is to eat," said Susanna. "One must eat and one must sleep. It is easier to honor God and deal justly when one does these things."

After breakfast Andrew led his flock to a narrow plane, and let them feed on the short grass, and frisk in the sunshine. Returning, he surprised Arnaud and the Countess holding a conference under the trees.

"We have a long journey before us, and we are not sure——" the Countess said to Andrew; but she could not go on.

"God has brought you to us, and I cannot feel that he wants you to leave us hastily," ventured Andrew. "It is a time of trouble. If you can be contented with us, you are welcome."

Susanna joined her husband in this invitation,

and thus the mother's room was open for the children to pass in and out.

"We have kept it shut; and now you are in it, it will be better for all of us," Susanna said.

The hamlet consisted of a few families who kept up the habit of meeting together for prayer and religious conversation. Formerly they had a stated pastor; but since the trouble in the valleys, only occasional service was held by the pastor.

The first Lord's Day after the exiles had taken up their abode with Andrew Monteil, Scipio Lentulus was with them. As foreign-born, he had been restricted to holding service as regular pastor. Finding it was the Countess Solaro who had lately arrived at the hamlet, he came at once to visit her.

"Is it possible!" he exclaimed, with his fine eyes full of tears. "For your castle you have these rocks!" Then sending his gaze outward: "His presence is felt here. On these heights there is peace."

"We can breathe the free air of heaven. I am thankful; and still, I am troubled about my husband. Have you any tidings of him?" she asked.

It was pitiful to look into the white, pinched face, and listen to the pleading accents of the lady who

had not a reasonable hope of meeting her husband again in this world.

"What we know not now we shall know hereafter," was said in a tone of sympathy that swept the heart of the Countess with healing influences.

"I try to look forward. I would follow my husband to prison and to death, gladly; but my boys hold me," was said tenderly.

"My sister, I know how you feel. It is hard. I feel that it is hard. But it is the will of your Father, and of my Father. Heavy as the burden is, it is nothing to the cross he laid upon the shoulders of his beloved Son. Look at the poor, pale face, marred with grief more than other men, and listen to his loving words: 'Father, not my will, but thine be done.'"

The angel of consolation was there; and the white face of the Countess shone with the healing of his touch.

Octavia found delight in visiting the families in the hamlet, and reading with them the evangelists. In this way she had the opportunity of doing a good work, and her own heart was strengthened and encouraged. Not unfrequently she gathered the children on the sunny slopes, and taught them to honor God and respect their fellows. Thus

the days passed by, and the autumn was fast approaching.

In tending the flock, and in the care of the vineyard, the lads made themselves helpful; while Arnaud was successful in bringing in game. And not alone this; but he was quick to gather all possible intelligence with reference to the acts of the governor, and the work of the soldiery in the valleys. Returning one night with his game-bag hanging limp on his shoulders, he was met by Octavia and Blanche, with saddened faces.

"The Countess is indeed very ill," they said. "She had a dream, in which she plainly saw the headless body of her husband. We cannot console her. She feels that he is dead."

"It is most probable," returned the huntsman. "Castrocaro has caused more arrests. We should not be safe, if he surmised that we were here."

"Then we must go away at once. We must not bring Andrew and Susanna into trouble," was the response.

"Our destruction would not secure their safety. Down with the Vaudois! is the cry everywhere heard."

"What would you advise?" asked Octavia, nerved by the danger that menaced her.

"I am not needed here," he began; "and if danger threatens the hamlet, I shall discover it. The lads are here, and it is wise to leave them here. Andrew will understand, if he is questioned—these are the people he employs in his vineyard."

It was plain to Octavia that the Count's sons would not be safe, if recognized. But here with Andrew they were apparently free from danger. She must not urge their going away.

Contrary to their expectation, Arnaud's suggestion, with reference to going into the valleys, pleased the Countess.

"In this way, you will gain intelligence," she said. "And when you learn anything of the Count and his brothers, you will hasten back to us." Her face showed an expression of relief. Arnaud caught it, and was encouraged.

"I will, your grace. In the meantime you must rest. Your sons are with you. You must bear up bravely for their sake."

"I am weak and selfish!" said the poor lady, turning to Octavia. "Teach me to be strong, as you are strong," she said, tearfully.

"We are neither of us strong with any strength of our own," was the reply. "Our strength is in God; and the way in which he leads us must be

the right way; and then we have so many assurances of his loving care and kindness," she said, sending a warm glance into the face of the Countess. "It is the only way to rest, I think. Just to cling to his promise: 'For I, the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not, I will help thee.'"

"But may we—may I appropriate this to myself?" said the Countess, coming tremblingly forward, and clasping one of Octavia's hands in her own.

"You consider yourself a child of God, do you not?"

"I am his child, adopted into his family through the death and resurrection of his Son," was said, solemnly.

"Then surely you may appropriate this promise," returned Octavia. "The youngest and the feeblest child in a family has a right to enjoy every privilege that a wise and indulgent father can bestow upon his family."

"I must think more of others," said the Countess, after a pause. "Susanna is a good soul; and she is cleanly; she gives me the best. Why should I not talk with her, as easily as I could talk with the Countess Carde, or the Duchess? I will begin

"I can't see how God allows it. But he does allow it. His own blessed Son was scourged and spit upon, and nailed to the cross. Often and often I ask myself how they could do it? God could have smitten them. He could have put their eyes out and struck them dumb; but he didn't do it. I know I should have done it. And the blessed Lord prayed. In all his anguish he prayed: 'Father forgive,' and so must we. It's hard. I can't do it as well as my mother could. But, I say to myself many times a day, that in this too, I must follow the dear Christ."

From outward sobbing there was now only a silent, settled sorrow. Francis Carde had suffered, and a thousand others had suffered, and thousands were lingering in prisons, and chained as slaves in the galleys. There was no security. The colayer had climbed up the steep mountain path with his Bibles; and the soldiers could climb, and might follow him.

Andrew brought in an armful of pine knots. It would be something to see them blaze up, and the glow over the room would tend to cheerfulness.

"It is hard, and I often say it," ventured the colayer. "The bread which we eat has seven crusts, and the best of them is burned! Still, I

cling to the Bible, and I will cling to it, as my father and mother did before me."

"You have told us about them before; but the rest might like to hear, too, Jacob," Susanna said.

With Susanna, to listen to anything was better than to sit still and think of one's own grief; and this the Countess was doing.

"My father lived in Barcelonette when the edict came for all the Vaudois to embrace Roman Catholicism, or to leave within the space of thirty days. Of course, there was never a thought of giving up the faith; and my father, with other of his friends, determined upon going into the valley of Freyssiniéres. It was near Christmas, and the cold was severe. My mother held a babe in her arms, and so did others of the women. The snow came down, and the poor people were out all night. Those who died were soonest at the end of their sufferings. My mother was one. She had gone to sleep with her baby in her arms, and they never wakened."

"It is good for us to think of these things; for it makes us thankful that we are yet spared from such fearful sufferings. It is not for us to know God's ways. Each morning we know that he has kept us through the night, and at the close of the day

we can thank him that all has been well. This is our life, I think," said Susanna. "In his own time he will make it plain to us. We must wait."

The fire was once more burning low. Octavia drew her stool to the side of the Countess.

"Susanna is right. We must wait. Arnaud will keep us informed of every thing. It is the best for him to remain in the valley."

Susanna went over to the bed and gazed into the faces of her sleeping children. Then she came back to the ample fire-place, and, leaning against the rough log that answered for a mantel, looked over to her husband.

"Sleep is good," she said, "and when we sleep we rest. But always before we sleep we must ask God to keep us."

Andrew did not habitually call upon Octavia to pray; but to night his voice was silent.

CHAPTER XIV.

WOOD CARVING.

THE open fire on the hearth afforded Octavia many hours for carving. At first she found the wood hard, and her knife would slip, as it had slipped on the night when the colayer got lost in the mountains.

"A bad sign! I say now, as I said then. But a sign that is bad can be turned aside, if one stops and doesn't venture any more for that time. I knit into my seam needle, just as my mother used to do, and folded it away carefully, and now you take up your carving for the first time since"—Susanna said, as Andrew and Octavia arranged their stools and brought forth their work.

Octavia did not smile. She knew that every human being had peculiarities, and Susanna was a good woman; whatever superstitions she had were harmless, and had come down to her through succession; her mother had received them from the mother before her, and so on.

The colayer remained on the heights for some

days, and when he went away, he gave his Bibles to Octavia, to be distributed among the families in the hamlet; and in return he was to receive the carvings.

Cold as it was, and slippery as the paths might be, it was always a source of pleasure to go up to the hamlet. Often in stopping to admire a frozen cascade, or a crystal column jeweled with sunshine, the old thought would take possession of her: "So much of God up here!" And again when she reached the dwellings of the poor people; the delight they manifested and the readiness with which they listened to her reading, with tears running down their cheeks, as they talked of their Barbas, driven away, and their church walls battered down. "And our brethren hunted like wild beasts. And who knows what the end may be?"

"It will be different now. You will not have to repeat the words of the Bible one to another; or even to wait for my coming. To have a Bible in your own house and in your own hands is a blessing. God's promises strengthen the hungering soul; and his gentleness subdues, chastens, and lifts up poor, shattered, throbbing, human hearts," returned Octavia, in reference to the Bibles that the colayer had given her for distribution.

"Aye, indeed. It is food for the hungry soul. It is something for poor folks like us to feel that we have a rich Father. And we must bear persecution; and not only bear it, but glory in it. And his very words, I like to think of them: 'When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another.' This is just what we have been doing, and our fathers were doing the same before us—driven out of one valley, we have gone to another. And now the mountains around us are our defence."

It was pleasant for these people, cut off from the services of the church, to have some one in whom they could confide. Then Octavia was versed in the knowledge of medicine, and thus when they were sick or in trouble they sent down to her, as to one able and willing to serve them.

Spring was come before they again heard from Arnaud. The sun lay warm upon the ledges shelving down behind the hut. Rills trickled down the crevices, and ran over the rocks in clear, limpid streams. A thin fringe of green herbage showed itself here and there. The icy fetters were broken; birds were beginning to twitter, and tiny Alpine blossoms came up through the dark mould, to sit in the sun and fill the gray old earth with gladness. Susanna was caring for the little ones.

"There is something to look forward to," she said, as Octavia came up the path. "The flowers are growing, and so is my Leon. See what steps he can take"—reaching out her hands to the boy who was gurgling and laughing, and stepping out with his fat legs. "It's the waiting and growing," she continued. "My Andrew was a lad once no bigger than Leon, and his mother led him over the rough steps, and laughed as he straightened himself, and watched to keep him from falling; and now he is such a man for strength; and just as his father, so will my baby grow"—raising the boy in her strong arms, and dancing around and around on the sun-warmed ledge.

Andrew had gone to the wood, taking Claude and Louis with him. Everywhere there was evidence that spring was coming early; and there was the vineyard to be freshly hedged, and vines to be reset. Evrard was left in care of the small flock; the Countess and Blanche joining him at times. The former walking slowly; now listening to the prattle of the child; and then sending her gaze along the heights—her fine eyes filling with tears, and her lips tremulous, as she whispered:

"It seems, it will always seem, that we have been nearer heaven here."

The soft south wind led the cottagers to open their doors. "The sun is like an old friend," they said. "Let it come in."

Octavia had become acquainted with the different kinds of wood. It was now little trouble for her to work at her carving, and frequently she carried it into the homes of the poor, isolated people; and sitting with them, while her hands were employed, she repeated verses and sometimes entire chapters from the evangelists; lifting up and comforting them, and in herself feeling the thrill that comes to one who, through sacrifice, brings joy to other hearts.

"It is a matter of rejoicing when the snow slips away from the rocks, and the sun warms the flower-buds, and the grass springs up. The children are just wild"—said a woman, breaking away from the crowd of listeners, as fresh young voices were heard outside.

"It is the children. And they are no longer half-frozen," continued the woman. "And here's Madeline!" with a cry of delight.

The young girl was securely wrapped in a blue rug, or blanket, bound about her waist with a belt of leather. In this she carried a white horn, or whistle, and her mountain staff. Evidently she

had taken the few goats to places where the snow had slipped from the moss, and she had found a few scattered blossoms; hence the wild cry of delight, that had first alarmed the mother, and afterward brought tears to her eyes. The clear, wax-like flowers were beautiful, but destitute of perfume.

"They have no heart yet," said the woman, as she held them up for admiration. "It is the sun will do this. And then they will take on color. The sun is a good thing. We have never too much of it. It does us good, as it does the daisies."

It was a pretty thought, and Octavia smiled in return.

"Will you be so good as to keep them," said the girl, timidly. "And, if you please, will you carve them in wood? Susanna told us that you can carve better than Andrew, and he can make beautiful things."

"I will try, Madeline. And if I fail, you must not think that I did not try."

"Oh, you will not fail! We will ask God to make you do well."

"Do you ask God for everything you want, Madeline?"

"Why should I not?" cried the girl, with

dilated eyes and open nostrils, as though it were an unheard-of-question. "We have no one else to go to. All winter we have asked God not to let the soldiers come up to Boudrina, and they have not come."

"Hush! child," exclaimed one of the older women. "The soldiers would have burned our Bibles, if they could have found them. We are not too safe. Maurice says, we are not too safe."

"We have God's word, and he says he cares for us and hears us. It would be terrible if he didn't keep his promise," said the girl, beginning to sob.

"Don't take it in this way, child. Madge did not mean that God's promise would fail. She feels as you do, that we must ask; and when we ask we must laugh and skip over the rocks, and enjoy the sunshine, and seek out the tiny white bells, secure in his constant care and watchfulness."

The woman had a bright, intelligent face. Octavia questioned if she was one who had been driven to the rocks, rather than deny her faith; or had her home been from infancy in the mountains?

"When the snow is gone we shall see the Barba, shall we not, mother?" asked the girl, now perfectly composed.

"We hope so," was the reply; "but if he does

not come to the heights, Octavia will come to us, as she has been doing."

"I know it; and she will teach me to carve. You will teach me to carve, will you not?"—leaving her mother and coming over to Octavia. "I think I can do it. We have not always been here; and I have learned so much about the goats. And I want to carve something to carry away with me," was said with child-like insistency.

"I will help you all I can. And I will try the flowers; and we shall have pleasant times together," was the answer.

Octavia went along the path in a blind, dazed way. The lustrous eyes of this young girl seemed to be still upon her. The quick pressure of her fingers she could almost feel. They had not been here always. No, she was sure of it. Though habited like a peasant, Madeline was not a peasant; and her mother was a woman that, for principles' sake, could adapt herself to circumstances. Who were they? And, of course, they had suffered, or they would not have climbed up to the heights. Thus absorbed, she did not perceive that one of the woodmen was walking silently on a point of rock from which he could easily perceive the windings of the distant valley, without drawing attention to

himself, by standing out clear and distinct against the sky. After the greeting he said, as he threw quick glances around him:

"This little nest of ours, just under the roof of the great blue arch, is so apparently safe."

Thinking his remarks had reference to the snow, Octavia asked if they were in danger of a snow-slide?

"Not when it melts in this way. But there is serious trouble in the valleys," was the reply.

"Has the colayer been heard from?" she asked.

"He was beaten severely, and then tortured to make him confess where he had hidden the Bibles. And the carvings—he would not say whose work it was; and it is feared that the poor man will die."

"Does Andrew Monteil know of this?"

"Our enemies are everywhere. We look to Andrew as our leader. He is already calling in the men," was the reply.

Octavia had seen nothing; but the man had caught the flashing of bright weapons far down the valley. Instantly, he dropped to the level of the gray rock, and motioned his companion to do the same.

"I hardly think it is our foes; but it is wisdom to elude observation, as far as possible," he said.

Pressed close to the rock, Octavia found a tiny blue flower. The sun, with loving glances, had quickened it into life; and blossoming into beauty, it turned its eye heavenward, content to live the life given it. Tears ran down her cheeks, unrestrainedly. God protected and hid it away from the chill and the frost. If God so cared for a tiny flower, moulding it into perfectness, and clothing it with beauty, how much more he had showed his love for her, sending his Son to be her guide even to the end!

Sending a swift gaze along the fastnesses of the rocks, she thought of the poor colayer. He had promised to return. She had looked forward to his coming. The Bibles had done, and were still doing, much good in Boudrina. She had anticipated his delight when she should tell him incidents connected with the reading, when the people gathered to listen, and the remarks that had brought strange beauty to her own soul.

Placing the tiny blue blossom by the side of the few white ones Madeline had given her, Octavia made her way through the most obscure paths. Occasionally, a few goats dotted the rocks; but Evrard was not to be seen.

Andrew met her before she reached the house.

"I would like you to know," he began—"you are one to know and keep from crying out—we have been warned of danger. Boudrina may be attacked. You must be prepared. We have sentinels on the heights, and the passes are well protected. If the soldiers come, they will find us ready. The cavern that sheltered you, will be the place for our women and children. You know the way."

"I am glad to know this. I will help you in every thing. And the lads,"—hesitating, and sending a swift glance into Andrew's face.

"Claude and Louis have charge of one of the passes. They desired me to say as much to you."

Octavia wondered that she had ever called Andrew's face heavy. He looked the hero; and as he turned and walked away, leaving her to go up the path alone, she felt that, for true nobility, this man, energized by the fear of God, and willing to sacrifice himself, if need be, had no peer.

That night there was a gathering for Bible reading in Susanna's dwelling, and earnest prayers went up for deliverance. But few dreamed, however, that the cloud, even then, was gathering, ready to pour its fury on their heads.

CHAPTER XV.

THE VAUDOIS DEFEND THEMSELVES.

PRESUMING on the warning already received, that the soldiers would not lose time in attacking Boudrina, the Vaudois proceeded immediately to erect barricades in the narrowest part of the valley. These ramparts, raised especially in order to present an obstacle to cavalry, were hastily formed of trees cut down and laid one upon another, between a double row of stakes, which represented the faces of a wall. The branches of these trees were covered with great stones heaped together, and cemented by snow beaten hard and moistened by lukewarm water, so that it congealed into a solid mass around the stones and branches, and resembled a wall of one single, solid block.

They had not long to wait. Two bodies of infantry were seen to be pushing forward, while the cavalry were still in the bottom of the valley. A company of pioneers preceded, to level the barricades.

As soon as this movement begun, the Vaudois

advanced by the left of the Pelice, till they were opposite Les Chiabriols, and fired upon the cavalry as soon as they made their appearance; then retreating from tree to tree, and from rock to rock, they continued to annoy them, until they reached the barricades situated beneath Villar. There they halted and united themselves to the company which defended that post.

The day was spent in perpetual combat; now on one point, now on another of this barricade, without the enemy being able to make a breach in it anywhere. All this time the infantry had scattered into small parties, and were climbing over the rocks; and, at nightfall, they passed the line so heroically defended.

The Vaudois were then obliged to separate their forces, in order to repulse these new assailants. The first who appeared had already crossed the torrent of Respart, and begun to ascend the vine-covered hills which look down upon Villar. The Vaudois, by running along the other slope, gained the summit, and partly repulsed the enemy in a hand to hand conflict. They were still thus engaged when the infantry on the right side descended above the barricade. Thus attacked in the rear, a panic was created. The men from the

valley of Clusone, seeing themselves caught between two fires, judged their destruction inevitable, and made their way out of the only pass that was still open to them. The more valorous of the Vaudois kept their ground until evening, and then retired in good order to Villar.

The soldiers followed them, crying out for vengeance, and threatening to burn the hamlet if they did not lay down their arms.

"If laying down our arms means, that we are no more to be molested in our religious service, we yield willingly," replied the Vaudois. "But, if you expect us to renounce our faith, we will never do it."

Inflamed by this reply, and above all, angry at the communications received from the arrest of colayers, who under the appearance of conveying goods from one valley to the other, still had Bibles in their keeping; the captain commenced a vigorous demonstration in the direction of Tagliaretto, in order to draw off the Vaudois, and to enfeeble them by that diversion.

Having now carried away all that they reckoned most valuable to the mountains, the Vaudois renounced the defence of the lower part of the valley, and confined themselves to the heights. Their as-

sailants therefore concentrated in the basin which extends, uninterrupted, from Bobi to Villar. They first attacked the hamlet of Boudrina, where, as we have seen, Andrew Monteil lived, with the exiles whom he had all the winter protected.

Making hasty preparation, this man put himself at the head of the few men in the hamlet, and nobly assisted by the youths, Claude and Louis Solaro, together with the women of the place, he repulsed the soldiers by two successive assaults without the loss of a man; while their assailants left many dead upon the ground. This great success of the Vaudois was owing to their valor, and the protection of their God; and to the circumstance that they were able to fire from above upon the enemy, and to shelter themselves from the fire of the enemy by running behind the numerous parapet-formed walls.

Fresh troops were added to the assailants, and additional succor came to the Vaudois. After all, it was only a handful of mountaineers to hold their ground against quadruple forces, well armed.

Abandoning that post, they climed still higher. Meantime the Vaudois fell upon their knees and cried with one loud voice to the Lord; then resolutely united for further combat. Those who had

not arquebuses, made use of their slings, from which they cast a shower of stones upon the enemy. Three times the assailants rested, and three times returned to the combat. When they rested, the people above prayed to God with reverent voices; and when the assault was renewed, there was the same earnest, persistent endeavor to do what they could.

At the third assault a messenger arrived, crying, "Courage! Courage! God has sent us the men of Angrogna!"

"Courage! Courage! Deliverance is at hand!" was echoed along the heights.

However, the men of Angrogna were not there. They were fighting at Tagliaretto, from which they drove the assailants. But the assailants of Boudrina hearing it announced that assistance was coming to the Vaudois troop, which had already harassed them by six consecutive assaults, now beat a retreat, in order to join the calvary, which remained posted in the basin of Bobi. The Vaudois pursued them; overthrew the walls of dry stones behind which they had taken shelter, fairly routed them, and effectually drove them beyond the confines of Bobi and Villar.

In this contest, Claude and Louis Solaro, flying

out on the right wing of the small army, received wounds, so slight at first as to have no further effect than to stimulate them to more daring acts. Before the combat ended, they were carried insensible from the field. The poor Countess, upon seeing the bleeding bodies of her sons, swooned, and for hours was unconscious. Arnaud was not come; and Octavia, feeling that it was in all probability the last hour with them, had put forth all her strength. To yield was not to be thought of, however; and after a short conference with Andrew Monteil, it was decided to care for the wounded; but to keep up the defence.

Already many of the women and children, exhausted and fainting, had sheltered themselves in the caverns and clefts of the rocks. Susanna was everywhere; now acting as a signal; then throwing stones with startling effect; and now binding up broken bones and producing remedies and cordials that opened weary eyes, and caused the poor, faltering tongues to thank God that it was no worse.

Meantime, Octavia and Blanche, with words of comfort and cheer, were passing from one to another, when it was announced that the day was won and the wounded were in a condition to recover. The Countess, seeing that her sons were not

mortally wounded, took courage. But few of the dwellings had been destroyed by the soldiers, and those could be readily rebuilt.

With one accord the people came together, to unite in public prayer and thanksgiving.

"It is of his mercy!" "God gave us the victory!" "And we should be thankful!" were expressions heard on every side.

"Yes; and it is well for us as a people to remember," Susanna said, as she gazed into Octavia's face, while a serene exaltation mantled her features. "I know the place and the verse. Often you have reminded me of it, and always it sounds out to me: 'Call upon me in the day of trouble.' It is comforting to know that there is One able to say this to us. It is just as it is with my Leon. When anything threatens to harm him, or it is dark and he is afraid, he calls out. He expects me to help him, and I do help him; and his cry is stilled. Yes," she continued, coming to the hearth and resting her elbow on the rough logs, "it was a day of trouble. We did call upon him, and he heard us, and came to our relief. This brings us nearer to him, does it not?"

CHAPTER XVI.

COUNTESS SOLARO AND HER FAMILY MAKE A SECOND ATTEMPT TO REACH LUCERNA.

THE Count had not been heard from, and grave fears were expressed with regard to the way he had been put to death. Another of the brothers had been held a prisoner at Villafranca. When Arnaud learned this, he determined to set him at liberty. Confiding his plans to a comrade whom he could trust, they made their way, without any one suspecting it, to the top of the castle, pierced the roof, descended into the attic, removed a plank of the ceiling, and reached Solaro's prison. The young man knew not, on hearing this noise, whether he ought to fear or rejoice. Putting his trust in God, he remained calm. With his eyes fixed on the wall, he saw the plank recede; then a dark lantern made its appearance; and presently the old hunter, Arnaud, threw his arms around him in a close embrace. Then, putting him from him, he said:

"We are come to deliver you;" at the same time opening his dress and disclosing a rope ladder. A

death-like pallor crept over the face of the prisoner.

"Courage!" whispered the hunter. "God has protected us thus far, and he will not forsake us."

There was no time to spare; before they reached the street, the jailer had heard the noise, and gave chase. The captive, faint from long confinement, could hardly walk. In Arnaud's attempt to bear him away in his arms, he was wounded. Solaro was taken back to the castle, and shut up in a place of confinement still closer than before.

This occurrence, however, had the effect of quickening the proceedings against Solaro, and hastening the termination of his bodily sufferings. The papers in his case having been sent to Rome, he was condemned to the rack. But on the day of execution he was brought forth dead from the prison in which he had been detained; neither was it known whether he had died by a natural, or by a violent death.

This intelligence, coming as it did after her sons had been wounded at Boudrina, led the Countess to desire most earnestly to make another attempt to reach Lucerna.

"It may be for the best," Andrew said, when appealed to by Octavia. "Our walls are broken, and

our flocks led away. There will be much work to be done before we can be as comfortable as we were when the soldiers found their way here. If you think best, I can only say, God be with you; and remember, wherever you are, such as we have we will freely share with you, at any time you may choose to return."

It was a long speech for Andrew, whose usual manner of fragmentary speech was sufficiently comprehensive; but stood out, like rocks disconnected.

"We have been here, and it is like home to us," said the young girl, weeping.

Susanna expressed herself with generous warmth. "You have been with us, and you have done us good," she said. "I wish my mother could have seen you. My mother was a wise woman, and you are a wise woman. I bless God. I shall always bless God for hiding you first in the cavern, and then bringing you to us."

It was settled. And the day was set. There remained only the leave-taking in the hamlet, and this was delegated to Octavia.

It was a difficult task to say "good-by" to the people of the hamlet, and, above all, to Susanna, and the children.

"You won't forget that you are to carve a whole village for me," said Paul, lifting his chubby hand to wipe away a tear, slowly rolling over Octavia's cheek. "You will do it as soon as you get there, and Jacob will bring it when he comes."

"Hush, Paul. To be asking at this time is not wise. But what does the child know?" turning to Octavia. "You will remember only that he is fond of you, as we all are," exclaimed Susanna.

The girl smiled into the child's face, and gave him her hand. Then his mother caught him up in her arms, and walked with them to the brow of the hill. The Countess and her sons were already there. A moment of silence, during which each eye seemed to be drinking in the view for the last time. Then a fervent "God bless you!" smote the air, and the weary journey was begun.

"Stop!" cried the child, "you forgot something!" with a tender earnestness in his face.

"What is it, Paul? What have we forgotten?" was asked.

"For Christ's sake! You did not say that."

"God bless the baby!" exclaimed Susanna, pressing her lips to the child's forehead. "God bless our baby!"

"For Christ's sake," said the child.

"For Christ's sake," was answered in chorus.

"Now it is right," said the child; a look of patient submission creeping over his face.

The Countess had the appearance of being stronger. The hope of meeting Arnaud sustained her. He had written but once, and it was possible that he had learned something more of the Count and his brothers.

The first night the fugitives passed in a deserted sheep-fold, a corner of which was covered closely, and by the aid of leaves and moss made a fragrant retreat for the small party, who were now thoroughly weary. Claude and Louis were barely recovered of their wounds. More than once they had come to a halt; but as no place of shelter offered, they were urged forward. Once in possession of the sheep-fold, their spirits sensibly lightened.

"Last night we were walking on the ledge and looking down the paths, and wondering how it would be with us to-night; and now we are here, and the stars are out, and God is reaching down his hand and smiling into our upturned faces." Evrard was one to find enjoyment in his surroundings; and his words brought comfort to his mother's heart.

Searching for water, the star rays flashed across

a silvery, rippling brook that emptied into a wooden trough not far from the sheep-fold. Producing a cup, Evrard insisted upon filling it again and again, while Blanche cut generous slices from the black loaf with which Susanna had furnished them. Change, and the hope in their hearts, led them to discourse with more freedom than they had done for many months. The memory of the late conflict grew dim, and at length faded into the days when the castle was their home and their noble ancestors looked down upon them through successive centuries. It was pleasant, and still the night was passing.

"Susanna is asleep long before this hour," said Octavia. "'Sleep is the best thing,' she used to say; and Andrew advised us to start early."

Bending their knees in the sheep-fold, just as they were accustomed to do in the castle, before persecution rendered them homeless, they fell asleep with their hands clasped, and their faces to the stars.

The next day their way was chequered with divers paths, and many turnings were made, and much precious time lost in eluding the vigilance of those whose questions might compromise them in the eyes of strangers. As the sun was setting, they

came to a scattered hamlet that showed signs of recent conflict. The cottages were partly destroyed; palings broken down, and the just-springing vines were torn and trodden into the earth. It was a sickening spectacle; and at once it was evident that rest for the night could not be found in such a place of destitution. As they stood gazing around, timidly, a young woman came from one of the huts with a pitcher which she filled from a neighboring spring. Observing the fugitives, she advanced fearlessly, mistaking them for friends.

"Do you bring news of the men?" she asked. "Are they coming to-night; or will the pursuit take them far away?"

"We are strangers here," said Claude, with manly frankness. "We judge there has been a sharp contest, and the men of whom you speak have pursued their assailants; but we have heard nothing of it."

"Then it is possible that you are on our side—that you are Vaudois," she said hesitatingly.

"The Bible is our guide. We are homeless by reason of our determination to follow its teachings," was the reply.

"Then you will comprehend our strait"—taking a step nearer and giving her hand. "It is desolate,

and we are not all here; but you must share with us. We have something left to eat, and the men will be coming in to-night, I think."

There was an honest cordiality in the tone that won quick response in the hearts of the fugitives. They followed the woman into the hut, the interior of which showed more comfort than the outside promised.

A white-haired woman was sitting on a bench near the door, and near her a small child was doing his best to walk, the woman holding out her hand to steady his steps; but leaving him free to his own simple movement.

"Just so," thought Octavia, "God steadies the steps of his children. He is near, he reaches forth his hand; but he does not step for them. He is the helper. Is it not a beautiful thought—the Helper, my Helper?"

The morning following found them refreshed by sleep; but the Countess was exhausted and could not go on. The pursuing party did not return during the night.

"A shelter is something to be thankful for," said the woman. "Poor as it is, it is better than the roadside, and you are welcome."

"Welcome! thrice welcome!" echoed the white-

haired woman. "With no strength for the journey it would sadden us to see you go from us"—while the child clung to Evrard's neck and would not let him go.

Before night the Countess was so ill, that all thought of leaving the hut for the present was abandoned. Meantime Blanche and the lads, leaving Octavia to care for the Countess, set to work to mend the palings, and reset the vines. Each day brought some of the wounded back to their homes. Still, no one came to Ursula's hut; and soon it was known that her husband had been taken prisoner. At first it was a sorrow too heavy to be borne; but gradually, the comfort that comes to those who feel that God's plan for every human soul is the best plan, filled her heart. It was all known to One who loved her with a love tenderer than mothers know for their children. He had been smitten, tortured, and led to a cruel death. Was it for her to follow in his footsteps when the way was easy, and now, when the path diverged, and the cross stood before her, must she shrink and cry out that the way was dark and she could not go on?

As the scattered inhabitants returned to the hamlet, Ursula's house become a Bethel where, in

the absence of a pastor, Octavia gathered those who were able to come, and read to them from the evangelists, and led them in prayer.

"It is doing something, and we are expected to use opportunities," she said to Blanche. "Besides, we do not know how long it may be for us to do even this."

When the Countess could be left safely, the wounded men were more frequently visited; and in this way much information was gathered with regard to the work of the soldiers in the valleys, together with the names of those who chose death rather than renounce the simple teaching of the Bible; counting it no loss to be deprived of their estates, provided they were left to the free enjoyment of the religion of their Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Every day brought fresh alarms, however. Count Charles of Lucerna wrote letters to the Vaudois, persuading them to send away their pastors, and bend to circumstances; were it only for love of him and the safety of their own families.

"We must do that which the love of God and of truth directs us to do," was the reply.

Then a deputation was sent to him.

"Send away your pastors," he said, "at least

while this storm lasts. I will promise in that case to use my influence for you to the best of my ability."

"We are deeply impressed by your kindness," they replied. "But we are not empowered to make such an engagement in the name of our people."

The Duchess of Savoy likewise wrote to this effect:

"Dear and well beloved, we shall commend the good desire which you show toward the service of God, as also of your prince, and we are far from thinking that you speak feignedly; but we have two things to ask of you: the first of which is, that while you reserve to yourselves the things which can only belong to the judgment of your own conscience, you would proceed in respect of them with sound discretion as well as with true zeal; for the one without the other is worth very little. The other is, that you would submit your deliberations to those who, being upon the spot, can judge accurately of what is expedient, both for the one party and for the other; and, if you allow yourselves to be questioned by those who understand public affairs and desire your repose, you will never find yourselves deceived, nor have cause of dissatisfaction."

Margaret of France believed in the good intentions of the Duke, and the governor; and accordingly she adds, in the letter above quoted, that she

hopes that time and experience will permit the Vaudois to do them justice.

Another curious particular connected with this system of persecution is the fact, that Charles IX. wrote to the Duke of Savoy a very pressing letter in favor of the persecuted.

"I have one request to make to you," he wrote to the Duke, "which I would make, not in an ordinary way, but with all the earnestness that is possible for me—for during the troubles of war, passion no more permits us to judge aright of what is expedient, than disease permits a patient to judge in his own case—and as you have treated your subjects in an unusual manner upon this account—for my sake, also, let it please you now, in kindness to me upon my prayer and special recommendation, to receive them to your benign favor, to restore them, and reinstate them in their possessions which have been confiscated. This matter is so just in itself, and is so earnestly regarded by me, that I assure myself you will readily comply with my wishes."

Charles IX. was naturally of an excellent disposition and possessed of rare abilities. He was brave, intrepid, and of sound judgment. He expressed himself with readiness and dignity. But

the seductions by which he was surrounded perverted this happy natural character; the Queen Mother herself trained him in the art of deceit and dissimulation; the Marshal De Retz taught him to make light of oaths; and the Guises, by their sanguinary counsel, turned the natural impetuosity of his character into cruelty. Placed in other circumstances, he would, perhaps, have been one of the most accomplished princes of whom the records of history have preserved the memory. If Charles IX. had been brought under the teaching of the Bible, France would have escaped many calamities. In connection we would notice that, after the massacre of St. Bartholomew, when sixty thousand Huguenots had fallen in France, the Duke of Savoy was filled with indignation. He energetically protested against the cruelties of Charles IX., affirming that he would never sully his reputation by such crimes, and at once proclaimed to the Vaudois, that henceforth they should have nothing more to fear. Notwithstanding the good intentions of the Duke, they were short-lived; adverse influences were made to act upon him; the fires of persecution flamed still higher. In speaking thus warmly, the Duke of Savoy had not rightly estimated the attitude of the Church of Rome in this matter.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE EAGLE'S NEST.

THE days were long in Ursula's house—longer than they had been in Susanna's home. The Countess was still feeble, and she leaned upon Blanche, and kept the girl near her.

"It is the wise course, I think," said Blanche, to Octavia. "With me she does not so much incline to talk of the old life. I amuse her, very much as I would amuse a sick child; and she smiles and laughs at my fancies. It is so. God makes some trees in the forest to reach their heads far above others, and their branches give shelter and warmth to countless winged creatures; and at the foot of the trees, rise the mosses, lifting their tiny cups to be filled by the same gracious hand. It is all service. You are the tall tree, Octavia, and I the humble moss-cup. He gave us each the place he would have us fill; and he loves us."

"You have very many pretty fancies, my dear. You comfort the Countess when her heart is well nigh broken. I have seen it, and I am grateful."

With Blanche to care thus tenderly for the Countess, Octavia felt herself more at liberty to speak to the women whom she met, sympathizing with them, and showing herself helpful in all little ways. Many of them were sick from exposure and ill-attended wounds, and there was a look of discouragement in their faces that called for the balm and oil that comes to the tried soul through the reading of the word, and a firm, loving trust in God.

To become thoroughly acquainted with their needs, she made long walks with Evrard over the rocks and the unused paths; finding flowers to brighten the caverns where many families were still sheltered; speaking to them words of encouragement and bringing them out to the ledges, to gaze at the sun as he poured his wealth of golden splendor over the distant valleys.

"It is easy enough to feel right and to do right when the sun shines," said one of the women, as she gazed along the shelving ridges into the purple distance, slashed with sun-rays. "It's then God seems nearer; and the troubles by the way do not interpose a wall through which we cannot make our way."

"Under any circumstances, the wall is not so

high that we cannot look over it," said Octavia, smiling.

"That is a wise thought," said the woman. "And I will think of it when the wall stretches before me, and I grope about for escape and find none. I will look over it."

"And gaze upon the Lord's face, just as you look up to the sun in his universal warmth and splendor; a symbol of the generous love God bestows upon the creatures of his hand," was the reply.

"I like best to think of his love through Christ," said another of the women. "I do not think that I could live but for this thought. He suffered for us, and with his stripes we are healed."

"Yes, and he loves us," was the remark ventured by another. "It is the love; and the love makes the sunshine in our hearts even when we are hidden away in the cavern."

Such words were stepping stones; the weak, worn women were mounting higher. Going down to the hamlet, more flowers were found in sheltered places.

"God put it here purposely," cried Evrard, plucking one of the small wildlings and holding it up for Octavia to admire. "Purposely"—as if talking to himself. "He knew that we would find it. He

meant to have us discover it; so he set it where the cold and the wind would not hurt it. He did not just drop it from a full hand carelessly."

Evrard had been nurtured under influences that promoted reverence; love of truth, and a firm belief in the doctrines of the Bible were inwoven into his being. He saw God in his works. He loved flowers, and delighted in them as the gift of God; and child as he was, he realized what it was to suffer for his name's sake.

Claude and Louis had hedged the vines, and constructed supports. Then they deepened the furrows and scattered seed, and looked forward to the time when there would be a crop to harvest. The white-haired woman leaned upon them, as she would have leaned upon her own sons; and Ursula spoke to them of her husband, and the way and manner in which he had kept the place. It comforted her to see them interested in building up the waste places, and not unfrequently she was beguiled into a strain that showed the hope in her heart, that her husband would one day return.

As the days grew long and the heat of summer perfected the growth of moss and lichen, Octavia and Evrard wound their way still higher over the rocks. The calm stillness of the heights brought

strange peace. Below all was combat—thoughts of her old life swept over her, as the breeze ripples the surface of the crystal pool. To the delight of the child, an eagle swept out in broad circles; then rising higher and still higher, was seen only as a speck in the unfathomable blue above them. Still gazing, she remembers the time when Francis Carde shot an eagle, and besought her to wear a feather for his sake. Tears trickled slowly down her cheeks. Francis had suffered martyrdom, and her brothers were widely scattered, if alive. At times during her wandering, she had felt that only a few hours and she would meet Valerio; but this hope had not been realized, and Arnaud even had not of late been heard from. Still there was peace. God saw the terrible calamities that weighed so heavily upon his people, and he could so order and arrange that blessing would flow from it. When or in what way, she could not determine; but she could leave it with him.

Thus climbing to the heights, with the child gazing up to the eyrie from whence he had seen the eagle take his flight, Octavia drank in new inspiration; and a stronger, purer love took possession of her heart. Herself a mote in immensity, God over her and around her, and God in the af-

fairs of men. How sweet the story of his love! He, the Son, came down to earth to be a pattern. He died, in order to lift humanity up to the arms of the great, loving Father. Death was only the vestibule through which all must pass; the portal to a life where sorrow and tears could never come.

In her musing she missed the child; fear took hold of her. Had he fallen over the rocks? Or had he ventured to climb to the eyrie? Awed and silent, she saw him sitting upon a narrow shelf, while the eagle, making circles in the air, suddenly dropped to the level of the nest, and curving his wings went slowly downward, with three eaglets on his back.

"He is teaching them to fly. Look how steadily he moves! And now he turns! How grand and tender he looks! I shall like an eagle after this!" exclaimed the child.

"A sight that we have never seen till now; and we must hasten home," said Octavia, with suppressed emotion.

It was a perilous situation for the lad. With his gaze going out after the eagle, would he be able to keep from falling down the rocks? Fearful of offering any assistance, she turned aside with assumed indifference, and was surprised, a moment

later, to find the boy at her side, with a knot of tiny blossoms in his hands.

The sun was shining in the valley, and a white cloud hung, like a protecting banner, just over Ursula's home. Blanche and the Countess were to be seen walking up and down before the door. The Countess was wearing one of Ursula's gowns. It was much too large for her, and she laughed, as she put it on; then turned her face to the wall and brushed aside a tear. Poor woman; she was doing her best to be strong. Now the path winds around the rocks, and the humble home and the promenaders are no longer to be seen.

The solitude deepens. At length the bleating of a pet lamb arrested Evrard's attention.

"It sounds like Mina. Listen!" said the lad, stopping in the path, and listening intently. "Of course it is not Mina; but it is like Mina. Can one of the goats have fallen?" he asked.

A little strip of green earth lay at the bottom of a perpendicular rock, and, peering over, Octavia discovered something that looked like the outline of a man lying there. Possibly it was a black lamb. Andrew whistled to his sheep. She whistled. There was no answering bleat.

The rocks were piled high on the opposite side of

the grass plat. From the point she occupied she could not perceive the entrance. Man or beast, it must have entered by a path, or fallen, perhaps, from the rocks. With no other thought than to assure herself that it was not a human being, she began the descent, dislodging a stone that fell to the bottom with a crashing sound. An unmistakable groan followed. It was now plainly revealed. A man was lying at the bottom of the gorge, with his pallid face partially concealed by his right arm. Bending over him, she saw, with consternation, that it was no other than Andrew Monteil. But how came he there? Meantime, Evrard had caught sight of Claude and Louis, and, running forward, he cried out for help. It was the work of a moment. The poor man was sitting up when they arrived; but he was too much exhausted to walk without assistance.

"It seemed hard to die here," he said, as they raised him to his feet. "I wanted to see you. I wanted you to know that Arnaud——"

"Do not fatigue yourself by telling us now," broke in Octavia. "Let us thank God that we discovered you in time."

It was a perilous walk over the rocks; and frequently they had to stop to rest. When they

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reached the hut, they saw that blood was running from a bullet wound in his side. Enemies had been on his track, and this accounted for the fall. The letter spoken of was streaked with blood. It was from Arnaud. The sight of the familiar characters caused Octavia to experience a faint, sickly sensation; her fingers trembled, and a spasm of pain shot over her features.

"Take it and read it to the Countess," she said to Blanche.

It was from Arnaud; but why had he sent it by the hand of Andrew Monteil? Why did he not come himself?

CHAPTER XVIII.

ARNAUD'S LAST JOURNEY.

THE question asked by Octavia, when the letter came, was answered as soon as Andrew could command himself to speak. Arnaud had reached his dwelling in a dying condition. He had made diligent search for the Count; and he had at last found one who gave him the sad intelligence, that the Count of Solaro had been tortured in the "extraordinary question," that is, the wedges. In the first place two planks are placed between the legs, then two more outside, and these are bound together with a cord. This formed what was called the "boot." Six wedges were commonly used; but in the case of "excessive obstinacy" ten were employed, which not only crushed the flesh, but broke the bones likewise. At each question of the Inquisitor, the executioner struck a tremendous blow on the wedges, causing the poor victim to cry out with the pain; or possibly to faint from the intensity of his anguish. The Count would not deny his faith, even to save his life; and the tortures had not been

stayed until all his bones were broken, and his body was one wound.

Arnaud, too, had suffered; and knowing that his end was near, he had dragged himself to Boudrina, thinking to find the Countess in the home of Andrew Monteil.

"It will ease his mind, if you go, and explain," Susanna said to her husband. "His strength is exhausted, and in doing a good deed, God will protect you on your way, and bring you back again."

Susanna was one to do by others as she would like others to do by her. Her heart was full of love and trust. She felt that God would protect her husband, because she asked him to do so. Andrew was not behind his wife in loyalty to his faith.

"They will feel how utterly hopeless is a further search," he returned, "and the letter will reach them; otherwise, they will never know, as much of it was written on the spot, and will explain for itself, Arnaud says."

"It is the knowing that it is all over. They can now think of him as at rest. Before, they were uncertain. It will be different when they see you," Susanna continued.

Encouraged by her words, and alike desirous of knowing how it fared with the exiles, Andrew

started. Relying upon his knowledge of the mountains, he chose the most secluded paths, and was surprised one day to find himself accosted by a man in the garb of a priest; but who had soldiers under him.

"Are you a Vaudois?" was asked.

"I was born in the valleys. I have never been any distance away from them," was the answer.

"Do you confess?" was the next question.

"I confess to God daily," was the reply.

"Do you confess to the priest?" was demanded.

"The priest is but a man. Why should I confess to him? He cannot forgive my sin," was said, boldly.

At this answer, the questioner was greatly inflamed.

"He is guilty of heresy; put him to death!" was the cry.

Awed by his boldness, his persecutors faltered. Some were for breaking him on the wheel, and others cried: "Throw him into prison!" The latter was done; and at night a woman opened the prison door, and, touching him lightly, bid him flee to the mountains. As he was passing the guards, one of them gave chase; but, fortunately in the darkness, took the opposite direction. The next

day, and when he had been sure of reaching them at night, as he was passing around a rock, that lifted him into prominence against the sky, an arquebuss was discharged, the contents entering his side, and sending him over the precipice, where he would have perished had not Octavia discovered him.

The latter trembled as she listened. Herself on the heights that day, she had not dreamed that soldiers were so near. Doubtless, they were searching for the Bibles; and, if they found them, what mercy could she hope for at their hands?

Arnaud's letter was in fragments, each one marking an event; now joining in the defence of a people persecuted for their adherence to the Bible; persisting in reading it for themselves, and determined to abide by its doctrines; then recounting the suffering at the stake, and the intense agony of the wheel; until, crushing the paper in her hand, Octavia's voice would lose itself in a sob—it seemed so terrible.

"Arnaud seemed anxious, in view of all the suffering he had seen, that Claude and Louis should go to Turin, in order to set the matter before the Duke of Savoy in its true light," Andrew ventured to say during the pause in the reading. "They

are not eye-witnesses, and the truth is kept from them," he added in connection with what was further said of the Duke and Duchess.

"I have thought of this," Claude began, "and to know that Arnaud advised it gives me courage. The Duke knew our father. He will believe us."

For reply, Octavia made an effort to say: "Here is a fragment. Arnaud was on his way to Lucerna. This is what he says: 'For some days we had little to eat but chestnuts; and our men were weak and faint-hearted. Before we had gone far we were attacked by a body of soldiers, and so unexpectedly that we had only time to throw ourselves into a square of four stone walls that had served as a sheep-fold, and became for us a sort of rampart in which we defended ourselves, until the captain who attacked us, enraged that so small a company fought so bravely, resolved to storm our fortress, and rushed on, sword in hand. But his rashness cost him his life, and the lives of some of the bravest of the soldiers who followed him. The rest finding that only death-strokes were to be gotten by fighting with men thoroughly desperate, thought it expedient to allow us to resume our journey without further molestation.'"

Ursula was weeping bitterly. Arnaud's letter

and the contests in which he was engaged, brought forcibly before her the incidents connected with her husband's death. He was not one to recant; neither was she one to deny the Christ of the Bible.

"But it is hard. I cannot deny that it is hard" —weeping and covering her face with her hands. "So many good men die, and so many evil men are made to rule over us. Why is it?" she said, to Octavia.

The Countess was weeping. Octavia did not at once reply. Ursula continued:

"It was so. The Barbas had their days to visit us, and instruct us in our duty to God and to men. And when we were sick and in trouble, they came to point us to God through Christ. Then the priests came and commanded us to go to mass, and to confess, just as though we did not confess to God every day of our lives. And the mass—what is it? I once asked a priest what it was, and he answered, that it was the mass, and that was enough; and, if I did not go, I should be a heretic, and to be a heretic was to be lost"—stopping abruptly, and with mingled sorrow and indignation in her voice.

It was pitiful—the poor woman was overcome. The white-haired mother moved quietly to Octavia's side.

"When the children weep, the mother takes them in her arms and soothes them with the music of her voice. God's children weep, and God's love is tenderer than mothers know. We need to hear of his loving kindness. It will do us all good," she said in a low voice.

With a swift prayer for guidance, Octavia opened the sacred volume, and read the account of the last sad scenes in the garden, the terrible anguish that caused the loving Christ to sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. And then the comforting assurance, that to suffer with him is likewise to reign with him.

"It is so, and I like to think it is so!" interrupted Ursula; "but there are times when I think it all over, and how my husband died, and the many worthy people who have suffered every loss, I feel that I must cry out. May the good God pardon me. I do not mean to deny him. No, indeed! I am not one to do that; neither was Bartol. To count everything loss for Christ was the right way, he said."

Andrew's wound proved to be more serious than was at first anticipated. Arnaud had been left with Susanna, and he was anxious to return.

"We cannot let you set out until you are

stronger," said the Countess, "and then some one must go with you," she said, tenderly.

"If these lads go to Turin, it will be well for them to go as early as possible. If not for this wound, I would myself set off with them. As it is, I must not delay them," answered the sufferer.

"Then you think it wise for them to go?" was asked, tremblingly.

"Arnaud felt sure that the Duke would be persuaded. He does not hear the truth, and consequently he shows himself to be cold and austere, when his heart is kind to this people," was the reply.

The Countess was worried to talk of the old life. The Duchess had been her friend.

"And the Duchess is herself a Christian," she said, feelingly.

"Then she will listen to the lads," answered the wounded man. "She will perceive that she has been imposed upon. This wicked governor, Castrocaro, has given the Duke to understand that the resistance of the Vaudois to the cruel mandates of the Papal Church is no other than rebellion on their part against the authority of their Prince. This is not the case; and if he ever perceives it, all will be well."

Octavia ventured to say, that this had been tried previously; remonstrances had been sent to no purpose, and deputies had alike failed.

"But this was before that dreadful day when so many Christians were put to death. Did not the Duke say that it was all wrong; that he would never sully his name by such an act?"—said the invalid, trying to rouse himself from the apathy into which he had fallen since his wound.

Octavia was surprised; the very words they had used in the evenings when Andrew taught her to carve, and he had treasured them up; she had never expected to hear him talk in this manner.

The white-haired woman was a skillful nurse, and in her youth she learned to dress wounds and to bind up broken limbs. Andrew Monteil was cared for in a way that would have more than satisfied Susanna, had she been there to witness it; meantime there was much questioning and frequent interviews. The question at stake concerned each one alike.

"It must be answered. And still it cannot be answered," Ursula said. "We must ask."

"That is the right word," exclaimed the white-haired woman. "It is the asking. If we ask for light, we receive light. Many times in the day I

say to myself, 'whatsoever ye shall ask.' I cannot comprehend just how it is, and I vex myself and him with my complaining. Still, I know he will not deny me; neither will he allow me to be tried beyond my strength."

It was a good deal for the white-haired woman to say; and for the rest of the day she was silent.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE JOURNEY TO TURIN DECIDED UPON.

AT dawn Octavia wakened, as if something had touched her. Through the crevice in the roof a glimmer of light penetrated. "It is the sun that wakened me," she said to herself. She put on her clothes noiselessly and went outside the hut. Ursula was preparing breakfast.

"The sick man is better this morning," she said. "He slept; and sleep is the best thing for him; and when he opened his eyes a wood-finch was singing. It is good when a wood-finch sings at break of day. The wood-finch is not at all like the cuckoo. The cuckoo flies from place to place. He has no home; he is a wanderer. Not so the wood-finch. He brings peace. The sick man heard him this morning, and he is better."

It had not before occurred to Octavia that Ursula was so like Susanna in spirit. Why not? They were both at home in the mountains, and their education was mostly traditional.

More glowing and more widely spread became

the rose tint in the sky, and more and more boldly the giant forms of the mountains stood forth. While she is still gazing, the great ball of the sun appeared, dyeing the heights in purple and gold, while far below them floated masses of rolling clouds, like noiseless waves. The day was fully come, the bright day, warming and kindling the earth with its glow. Countless glittering vapors rose up from tree, and grass, and flower; the song of the wood-finch was again heard; and the young girl stood with her arms outstretched, as if she must embrace infinity. She did not kneel; she stood upright. What was it but a type of creation? God made it, and her eyes had seen it; blessing must and would follow it.

Octavia went into the room of the Countess and came out again; the poor lady was still asleep. Blanche came out in time to catch the glowing picture. She thought herself quite alone.

"Now come," she exclaimed. "Whatever I have to do or to suffer, it is only a work before I go away. The hour will doubtless come. Sooner or later, it will come. I am ready. I have lived."

The glow of the sunrise had fallen on the sweet, upturned face. Octavia slipped away. She had no wish to intrude upon thoughts so elevated.

Claude and Louis were coming up the narrow path with some mountain parsley in their hands for Ursula. As they encountered Octavia, their faces brightened.

"We have been talking it over," they said.

Octavia had only been conscious of one thought. Andrew was better. Then the glory of the newly-risen sun took possession of her, to the forgetfulness of present environment. Now she felt a thrill—a tremulous movement—as if being wafted downward. What had the lads been talking over?

"We have seen Andrew," they once more began. "He thinks he will go to-day, perhaps to-morrow; and the sooner he goes, the better for us and for the poor people, if the Duke can be prevailed upon to spare them."

"We must not blame the Duke of Savoy too severely; and the heart of the good Duchess is with us. She believes reports coming to her from officers appointed to rule over the people," said Octavia, with a willingness to excuse those who were led to depend upon false representations in making their decisions.

The lads were standing with uncovered heads, looking away into the new world, created by the rising of the sun. It was a glorious symbol of the

Sun of Righteousness bringing light and immortality to the universal brotherhood of men.

As they reached the door of the hut, the Countess was there with her hands outstretched to her sons. Must she permit them to go from her? Tears filled her eyes. It was a long journey; and what if anything should happen to them?

Ursula had her cakes baked; but first she would surprise them by bringing Andrew out.

"Look!" she cried, as the sick man stood before them, clothed in a garb they had not seen. "It was Bartol's coat; and it fits him exactly. And here's a blanket," displaying a square of heavy cloth, with a slit in the centre just large enough to admit the head to pass through."

She spoke quickly, as if anxious to rid herself of some oppression. In reality, she was only eager to know if they had decided to leave her house and not to return.

Since Evrard had been with Ursula, he had singled out a lamb from the small flock, to be called, for the time being, his own. It was natural for the boy to have something to pet and to love; and already the lamb answered to the name he had given it—"Beauty." It was always ready for the black crust he never failed to bring; and in return,

there was a cup of milk for his mother every morning.

"Evrard will stay. Evrard will not leave us," as she dropped her large brown hand over Beauty's neck; but in reality it was to the Countess she was speaking. She was herself a mother, and she knew how a mother must feel to see her sons go from her on such an errand. Yes, a mother; and she had been a wife. And her husband had defended himself, and had died rather than turn his back upon the faith. That was something she was proud of. Only it was hard. God knew it was hard. This was comfort—he knew it. And just because it was hard, he would help her to bear it. She had his word for it. It was a draft she could take to the Father, and every time when presented it would be honored.

The day passed as all the days passed; only Octavia did not climb to the heights. The Countess was still wearing Ursula's gown.

"I shall finish it to-day," Blanche said, in reference to the new one. "And, if you go over the mountains, it will be strong, and the rocks will not catch hold of it and keep you back," she said to Octavia.

"By all means," said Ursula. "There is a comfort in new clothes."

"Everywhere a woman has pride in new clothes," thought Octavia. "Ursula is made happy with a new dress, and so is the queen; the difference is in the material."

It was not the night for the regular meeting together of the poor people. "But we go to-morrow," Octavia said, as she entered the humble abode, and made known to the inmates that she was about to leave them.

"But you will come back again?" they asked.

"Our times are in God's hand. Whatever his will may be, it is for me strictly to adhere to it," was the reply.

"Will you go to Turin?" was questioned.

"Not to Turin; but to the hamlet, Boudrina, where an old servitor of the house at Caragli lies dangerously ill."

"That is a good errand!" was the exclamation. "We will pray to God for you, and, if he sees best, you will come back; and he will see best, if the blessed children ask him."

"Alas! if the soldiers return!" thought Octavia, an involuntary shudder visible in her face.

"They were driven. It was a great victory," said Ursula, seeming to understand the inmost thought of the young girl.

Returning to the hut, Octavia stopped at a small spring gushing from the base of a rock, and, dipping her hands, bathed her face, and shook the glittering drops from her finger tips. Everything was cool and pure and sweet. A bird was hanging on a branch overhead, and a slender stalk of bluebells swung lightly in the breeze.

"God is good," she murmured; "the air, the water, and the flower, are for us to use and to enjoy. Not a spot so barren that he forgets it—a pebble, a glittering sand, a flower—something to remind us of his love. Not a soul so desolate that his sympathy does not find it out. He knows, and will answer if we ask him."

Andrew was sitting on the step with Bartol's coat on.

"It is a comfort; that was an ugly rent in mine; not enough left of it to make even Franz a coat," he said. Franz was Ursula's boy.

Andrew was not yet strong enough for the journey; but he felt that he must go.

"We will take the glass," he said. "We can see a long distance then, and if danger menaces, we can better meet it."

Octavia did not like to think of danger. In her heart it was right to go; and, if right, God would

go with them, to lead them into secure paths, and his hand would defend them.

The daylight was fading, and gigantic shadows clung to the base of the mountains. The strip of brown earth before Ursula's door had been swept clean. It was the last night that the people in the hamlet would gather there for the purpose of hearing Octavia read the Scriptures. Since their pastor had been driven away, it had been an especial privilege for them to listen to the young girl; and they were grateful, and felt what a loss it would be now she was to go from them. Would God remember them and send another? Their hearts were well-nigh broken when the pastor prayed with them for the last time; then another came; and now will he send a third to stimulate them in the path he would have them tread? One by one they came, saddened, but still hopeful. But to see Andrew Monteil, was to open all wounds; for husbands and fathers had been in the conflict, and some of them had died of their wounds, others had been tortured, and still others sent to the galleys.

The Countess came out when all were assembled, and took a seat on the bench by the door. She had taken off Ursula's gown, and had put on her own garments. To protect herself from the night

air, she covered her head with a black handkerchief, that brought into prominence the white pallor of her cheeks, and the sad expression of her large, dark eyes. Evrard pressed up to her side, and held her hand tenderly. Claude and Louis stood near her. Ursula gazed at the group, and wiped her eyes on the corner of her white apron.

"One can see that she weeps all the time," she said to her neighbor. "And now her boys are to go to Turin; and it is possible that they will never get there."

"It is all the same, the sorrow," said the neighbor. "This woman is a Countess, and she weeps over the loss of her husband and her home. We are nothing but poor folk, and our grief is the same. Husband, and home, and now children, all gone. When one loses everything, it cannot be worse."

There was no reply, and soon again Octavia was reading, and the small group was listening with radiant faces. Closing the roll, she touched upon the compassion of Jesus, the tenderness of his love, manifested in his works; his sympathy in taking upon himself the burden, and saying to the sorrowing soul, "Come unto me; rest, poor soul; rejoice in thy God. 'Ye are the salt of the earth. Ye

are the light of the world.'" "This," she said, "was the language made use of by the Son of God to Christians; men obscure by birth, unknown to the great world, and not unfrequently hunted down like wild beasts; tortured, and burned at the stake." Then again she read: "But let none of you suffer as a murderer; or, as a thief; or, as an evil doer; or, as a busy-body in other men's matters. Yet, if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf. . . . Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

It was an occasion for questions to be asked, and answers to be given. Andrew Monteil spoke of the peril he had been in, and the comfort he had experienced in thinking that God did not forget his necessity. When most he needed it, God sent relief.

"It is the way always, I think," he said, his plain face lighting up with the fervor of an enlightened soul. "Whenever we are in positive want, God is quick to supply that want. 'I will never leave thee,' he says, 'nor forsake thee.' All others may, but God will not."

The women spoke of the help it was to them to feel in the morning that God had kept them free

from alarm at a time when their brethren in the valleys were harassed on every side.

Only the Countess did not open her lips. How could she? To live without her boys! She must not let her thoughts dwell upon it. Leaning upon her God, she must endure it, and not let her heart grow cold and hard under it Ursula saw the struggle. She thought it was time to separate.

"It is good to be here, and we have been strengthened by it," she said, rising to her feet. "But sleep is also good. Some of us are to go, and some to stay; but sleep we must all have."

The women went away so quickly, that it seemed as though they melted into the night. The Countess kissed her boys, and tottered back to her room.

Soon the inmates of the hut were asleep. All save Octavia; she was awake, and restless. The moon was in her full, and the valleys and the rocks were a marvel of beauty. She was glad to have it thus on the last night; and gazing outward, waves of calm, sweet content rolled over her. Going away, she would carry the memory of this evening with her. Then she slept, with the smile of God around her, and the moon sailing calmly through the heavens.

CHAPTER XX.

BURIAL BY TORCH-LIGHT.

THE sun was just flushing the mountains, when Ursula struck thrice on the house door with the new walking-stick she had just cut for Octavia. The Countess was soon up and dressed, and the lads were ready before Andrew and Octavia came to join them. The latter had been to say good-bye to some sick people, who could not come to the gathering the night previous; and to each she carried a piece of her carving, something that they could look at, and recall the time when she was with them. The Countess was very pale; but wisely restrained tears. Octavia had put on her new dress and the strong shoes.

"How handsome she looks!" Ursula said, aloud. And she called the Countess and Blanche to see "how much a good dress can beautify one."

The dress was patterned after Ursula's. This accounted for the pleasing effect, perhaps. Ursula was not one to know when to stop chattering. Always the soft patter of words was heard, like the falling of an April rain.

"We must have our last prayer together," Octavia said. She knew this would comfort the Countess and lads more than anything else; and kneeling before the door, with their faces to the glorious East, they thanked God for the safety of the night, and invoked his presence to go with them, and his protecting power to remain over those who were to be left behind.

Then the Countess and Evrard went back to the small room, and stood gazing, through tears, after the dear ones from whom they had just parted.

"And now, mother, you must not grieve," said the child. "God can show them a path that the enemy will not find. He will go with them. We have asked him, and he will remain with us. We have his promise, and now we must be happy."

The mother could only kiss the fair, upturned brow. God saw it all; he knew the parting from her brave boys well nigh broke her heart.

Ursula endeavored to go about the house as usual, but she made many mistakes, unconsciously. At length she went to the Countess and told how she had last seen them over her right shoulder. And this was a sign that they would reach their destination in safety.

"Whatever one sees, for the first time or the last

time, over the right shoulder, is sure to come to a good ending. I have never known it to fail, and you can rest easy," said the woman, with well-meant effort to comfort the Countess.

"Is a belief in signs common to the people in the mountains?" asked the Countess, anxious for anything that would distract her thoughts, and help her to a quicker command of herself.

"Certainly! and why not? My mother was a wise woman; and her mother before her was a wise woman. And I have been told that always in my grandmother's family, before a death, a star would fall; or a bird would fly in at the window and sing a few notes that, rightly interpreted, meant that some one living under that roof would die before the year closed. Oh yes. I have many times remarked this in my good man's life. Bertol was often making journeys, and I noticed that when I looked after him, and saw him, as if by accident, over my right shoulder, he always came back to me. The last time, alas! I saw him over my left shoulder. From that moment I knew how it would be"—soft tears falling as she spoke.

With seeming acceptance of signs and their import, the Countess screened her tear-swollen eyes, by twisting the black handkerchief round her head,

and walked along the shelving ledges that led to the vineyard. From the hut door she could see that Blanche and Evrard were there. Now that Claude and Louis were absent, there would be more for them to do.

"And this is right, perhaps. When one is obliged to labor, he cannot give himself up to grief; for too much depends upon him, and so work brings a blessing"—the Countess was saying, as she dropped easily from one ledge to another.

As the sun climbed higher, the rugged sides of the mountain were brought out in full relief, and the paths could be distinctly traced. To avoid suspicion, the travelers fell back one after another, allowing several rods to lie between them, and then clinging to the low growth, and becoming, to all appearances, a part of it—thus escaping a stray shot, provided a soldier was holding his watch there.

At midday they came upon a small enclosure, surrounded by rocks. The sunshine lay at the bottom, like a cloth of gold; the sides of the rock were green with clinging vines; and on the thin soil at the top, a tree stood leaning, like a green canopy, through which the sunshine sifted generously.

"We must rest here," Andrew said.

The small company had not for hours spoken a word; now they were free. Octavia stood with bright eyes and flushed cheeks.

"What a place to rest in!" she said, gazing with admiration upon the enclosure.

"We can spread a table!" exclaimed the lads, as they came upon a half-circular ledge, with a raised platform below, that would answer for a seat.

Ursula had provided them with various articles of food for their journey. When these were placed on the ledge, Andrew said: "Thus far God has protected us;" and with uncovered head, he craved a blessing on the simple fare.

Sitting in the shade of the overhanging boughs, Octavia and the lads ate with a relish stimulated by their long walk and rapid climbing. Andrew, on the contrary, could hardly taste a morsel. Climbing the narrow, precipitous path, irritated his wound. It was evident that he could not go on. After luncheon, it was deemed advisable to remain where they were until another day.

Stripping the vines from the rocks, and bringing such leaves as they could gather, a bed was made for the wounded man, and he was left to rest, while the others watched the distant passes until sunset. Then Octavia, folded in purple shadows, ventured

to stray from the enclosure. The moon was rising over the valley, and the stars showed a peculiar brilliancy. Claude had seen Octavia as she left the enclosure, and he hastened to meet her.

"There is much of God's works up here in the mountains," he said. "The peaks stand out clearly, and the stars are larger. How many thoughts rush in upon us! Are these glittering orbs the many mansions prepared for those who love God? Do they, the poor people who are struck down for their faith—do their spirits go at once to these mansions? Wherever we look, the earth upon which we dwell seems in comparison so very small. Still, upon this very earth was enacted one of the grandest dramas that heaven ever knew. The Son of God, who was made flesh, lived here just as we live. The sight brings no new thoughts"—gazing into the blue arch above him, and then away to the dim, distant valleys. "It all resolves itself into this. There is so much that speaks of God up here in the mountains!"

Octavia was gazing upward in the same manner. She was saying to herself: "There is Orion, and there the Pleiades." In the old days she had studied the heavens as a science. She could trace the constellations and knew their course. Were

they worlds, as Claude had questioned? God created them, and his hand held them. It was God who hung the round world "upon nothing." It was God, and this God was her God. He was bending over her, and he loved her. These worlds were his creations. She was his adoption, a child, and an heir; his by the purchase of his Son; neither could anything take her out of his hands.

"God has not permitted us to know," she said, at length. "'I go to prepare a place for you,' is assurance sufficient to satisfy faith that springs from love. Heaven is a place prepared for the final gathering of all those who love God. It is real. We can think of it as one thinks of home."

From gazing at the stars, Claude's eyes were caught by zigzag flashes along the valley. Instantly he took alarm. Had they been seen during the day? And were soldiers already on their track?

Summoning Louis, there was a short conference; then the lads, leaving Octavia to apprise Andrew, according to their signal, slipped silently along the brown cliffs; swinging themselves along when they came to the face of the rock, and thus dropping noislessly to the lower ledges.

"List!" cried Claude. "There are voices!"

A low, dirge-like sound was now perceptible.

Then the broken line made a halt, and closed in a hollow square.

"It is a burial;" whispered Louis. "And they are singing a hymn. Some one whom they love is dead."

The words sounded strangely solemn; the lads bowed their heads.

"To be obliged to bury one's friends in this way! It is as if one was a criminal, and was afraid to have men see him. This must be a Vaudois, and they are making the grave at night through fear of the priest," was whispered.

Again the weird music of the hymn sounded along the slopes; then the line of march was once more taken, and gradually, as they looked, the torches faded into the night, and the solitude was unbroken.

To gain the enclosure was a more serious undertaking than the descent had been. They could not go up the face of the rocks, and to find a path required time. Besides, there was a fear, lest they in turn would be seen outlined against the clear sky. When they reached the height, their hands were torn and bleeding. Octavia was keeping watch, and Andrew still slept.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE FIRST STAGE IN THE JOURNEY.

ON the following morning Andrew professed himself to be stronger. After their morning meal, and their united prayer to God, they once more set out. A mist veiled the sun, and hung in heavy folds over the valley. Not a breath rustled the leaves; the birds clung to protecting branches. At noon the mist changed into a pouring rain, and presently rapid little streams ran across the path, and gurgled and plashed down the mountain side.

Octavia, with the help of her Alpine staff, walked quietly forward. Claude and Louis were always near. It was harder for Octavia than for them, and likewise it would be easier for Andrew not to have any anxiety on her account. The journey to Boudrina was not long; but it was difficult. Their care had been to avoid observation, and the paths they had chosen were unfrequented, save by the chamois and the wild goats.

Independent of the rain, they mounted up higher and higher. The clouds pressed closely upon them;

the valleys looked like a great deep. Then they began to descend; the path was slippery, and the ledges precipitous. Claude now took the advance. Night was coming on, and Andrew was obliged to rest a little.

"My head reels, and I am in danger of falling," he said, plaintively.

Octavia removed her blanket, and flung it over his shoulders.

"Now we can steady you a little," straightening the blanket and bringing the ends behind him. "You will find it a great help to you. This is the way we help children to walk," she said, laughing lightly at the same time.

But for the laughing it is possible that Andrew would not have accepted such assistance; but the hamlet was not now far away, and he longed to see Susanna and the children.

Descending, they were still on high ground. The mist and the rain was on the increase. They could only see a few yards before them.

"Here are way-marks; we must be at home presently," Andrew said. Then he stopped, and endeavored to penetrate the thick, gray wall. There was a shout from below; men were crying out to each other.

"Halloo!" shouted Andrew.

"Halloo!" came back to them.

"It is Jean. We are at home," said Andrew.

The hut was soon visible. Andrew told Claude to go in advance and open the door, so that Susanna would know they were coming. Mina was standing before the hut. Susanna had just finished the milking. She gave them a glad welcome,

"It is for the sick man," she said, "but he's fallen asleep. I think you all need it. Take it. He shall have some when he wakens."

She passed the cup to each, without at once seeing that Andrew's face was ghastly pale, and that it was something beside the rain that rendered his movements slow and strained. Then she went out and gathered an armful of pine-knots, and soon a gentle heat was felt, and the wet clothes were drying.

"A new coat and a good one!" exclaimed Susanna, as she helped her husband to remove the wet garment. "But why the necessity? How came you to think of a new one?"

Andrew staggered to the bed. The heat and the exhaustion was too much for him.

"I see! I see! You are wounded; you are dying!" screamed the woman, dropping the coat, and going over to her husband.

"Calm yourself, good wife. I am not dying. It was a random shot, and I fell"—stopping abruptly, and throwing a pleading look over to Octavia.

The latter had been to look upon the face of Arnaud, the huntsman. How it all came back as she stood by his low couch! The castle, massive in its strength and beauty; the ease and refinement; the scholarly attainments of the guests; the noble conversation of her brothers; and last, the hunter with his troop of pages, falcons, hawks, and bells. Is it possible? There he lies, with his master dead, and the family scattered! Without knowing it, she was weeping.

The sick man opened his eyes; they rested upon Octavia's face. A brightness crept over his countenance; his fingers moved nervously. There was recognition, and then unconsciousness.

The sound of the rain died away on the roof, and the heavens, that had been all day hidden, were full of silver lamps. Through the low windows the pure light of a distant star fell across the sick man's pillow. Octavia was holding one of his hands, while Claude and Louis were kneeling by his couch and weeping.

"Do not weep. I have seen you. I can now die in peace," was said, faintly.

Susanna was standing outside. She had no wish to disturb them; still, Arnaud was her patient. She opened just a little crack in the door and looked in. Then she went back to Andrew.

"His pale face is not as it has been. There is the look on it of one who is taking leave of everything."

"Tell me of your mother and Evrard?" the sick man was saying to Claude.

There was no sleep in the hut. Andrew, weary as he was, could not be persuaded to close his eyes. The messenger was at the door, though they could not bar his entrance.

Susanna kept herself busy.

"When the mother was ill, I knew the remedies; and it comforted her. It is not so with wounded men, and there is the anxiety. One wants to do; but nothing can be done."

Andrew answered, that his wound was not dangerous.

"God be thanked!" cried Susanna. "It is very strange, but we cannot know why the good Lord allows his children to be shot down like wild beasts; while them that's not shot are tortured, and their groans go up before him."

"Hush! Susanna, hush!" said Andrew, faintly. "It is the trial of our faith—'being much more

precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.'"

"I know," sobbed Susanna. "But I think of the terrible suffering, and I say to myself—and I can't help saying it—'Could I bear it and not deny his name'? Peter was afraid of the torture, and he denied."

"But he never did again. You must remember that. He never did again," was the response.

"But could I do it?" persisted Susanna.

"I trust you will never be put to the test," said Andrew, tenderly. "But if you are, I do not think you are one to deny Christ."

"You have faith in me. And Christ has faith in me. And I have wanted to have faith in myself. But I must have faith in God. If he does not leave me, then I know that I would not do it. Now I feel stronger. Now I will try never to think this way again," looking brightly into her husband's face.

Andrew went into the sick room, and came out with a grave face.

"The poor man is near his home. He has no need of remedies. The good Lord has him by the hand. If you would see him, Susanna, come."

The lads were still kneeling by the couch, and Octavia was occasionally repeating a promise. Susanna and Andrew kneeled at the foot of the bed. Gradually the light of a new day streamed into the room, and the face of the sick man revealed the peace that passeth understanding.

Susanna drew the sheet over the white, still face.

"It was so when the mother died," she said. "The sun was shining, and the swallows were twittering on the roof, and it seemed strange. Now it's not strange; death is only the door through which one must pass into the new life." Susanna was not one to keep silence. She must speak her thoughts. "My mother's was a beautiful death," she continued, "and this is a beautiful death. There was no choking; and when he went, none of us could say. I do not think I shall ever again fear. A death like this is only the blowing out of a candle, to be lighted on the other side."

Susanna came from the room, and stood by the side of her husband.

"It was a beautiful death, and we must see that everything is handsomely done."

"Berger made the mother's coffin; he will make this, if we ask him," said Andrew.

"We will ask him. Stop; I will go myself. It will save you, and Berger has his ways."

As twilight gathered the next evening, the people of the hamlet assembled on the level plat before Andrew's door. Susanna insisted that the lads and Octavia should each drive a nail into the coffin. "Not every one who died could have such a good coffin," she said.

The women pressed nearer. Many of their own had been buried coffinless. It made them weep. Octavia opened the roll, that she always carried in the folds of her dress, and read a few verses in a distinct voice. Then Andrew made a brief prayer, and the coffin was lowered into the ground by the side of the house mother.

"Now it is over," said Susanna, as they turned back to the hut; "now it is over, and we must think of the lads, and the journey they are to take. There is no more fear for Arnaud. The lads are to leave us; and it will be like sending two lambs where the wolves can pounce upon them at any time."

"Hush, Susanna. We must not stir up a host of fears. God will care for them. It is a noble errand. They go to implore clemency for the people," exclaimed Andrew.

"And what does the Duke of Savoy care for the poor people? He has promised us before this. His promises are ropes of mist; they will not bear the weight of his little finger."

"The good Duchess may listen to them," was the reply.

"And she may not," insisted Susanna.

Octavia was coming along the path, with Claude and Louis on each side. Andrew went forth to meet them, without stopping to answer his wife.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE DESERTED VILLAGE.

IT had not been Octavia's purpose to remain at the hut after Arnaud had ceased to need her service; but the rumor of fresh alarms in the valleys, and the fear lest suspicion might fall upon the lads as they journeyed to Turin, constrained her to delay her departure for a few days. Added to this came a request from the people in the hamlet.

"It is so long since we had a pastor," they said; "and now that you are with us again, we can have meetings, and you will read to us, and lead us in prayer."

Susanna joined in this request, and Andrew was not willing to see her set out, without some one to go with her. And thus she consented to remain until some one could be found who was traveling in that direction.

It was a hard thing for the lads to say good-bye; but the hope of bringing a reprieve to the poor people, persecuted because of their loyalty to the Bible, stimulated them to bear bravely.

"We feel that it is right for us to go. The Duke will listen to us. He knew our father, and he knows that we do not come of a stock given to pervert the truth," said Claude, proudly.

With minute instructions from Andrew as to the way, they set out. At the close of the second day they halted at a hamlet that bore little evidence of being inhabited; dwellings were unroofed; doors broken down, and walls shattered. The street presented a revolting spectacle, and the wrecks of households spoke sadly to their hearts.

As they reached the last dwelling, without so much as meeting an individual, they came suddenly upon a man with a bundle of fagots on his shoulders. His surprise was greater than theirs, and his first thought seemed to be to run away.

"We are but wayfarers," said Claude; "and if we may judge from appearances, this is a Vaudois village, and the soldiers have driven the poor people away, killing them outright, as heretics, or delivering them over to torture to satisfy the demand of Papal Power."

"Are you Vaudois?" asked the poor man, letting fall his fagots, while a certain animation showed itself in his before stolid face.

"We believe in the Bible; we confess to God,

and ask him for everything we desire, for Christ's sake."

"Then I will say it; and I was afraid to say it. In times like this it's not safe to speak out. Our enemies are not all soldiers. The priests hate us; and if they can find a Bible, they make it a pretext, and complain that the people are revolutionary, and not loyal to the reigning Prince."

The man was showing unusual intelligence. Possibly it was a snare. And Claude repented that he had spoken so freely. The next remark quieted him, however, while Louis' face was free from the agitation he had previously shown.

"This is the venture I dared to make," said the man. "Our women are still hidden away, and the children are crying for food. I felt that I must see if anything could be found in our old home."

Kindling a fire with the fagots he had brought for that purpose, they warmed themselves, and the lads prepared to go on.

"If you will stay, you are welcome. There is a little meal in the barrel, and water in the spring," said the man, with a warmth that won them to accept of his hospitality, scant as it was.

Eating their parched meal, and drinking pure

water from the spring, the man spoke once more of the late conflict.

"I was with the others; we were doing our best to drive back our enemies, when I was struck down. They thought I was dead, and kicked me one side. Then the wind blew in my face, and I revived, and, by-and-by, I could get up; and now I am here. It is a miracle, many would call it; but God kept me."

Together, they went through other dwellings. It was desolation; everything available had been carried away or destroyed. When they returned to the fire, the man said:

"It's a strange thing; there are faces that we meet for the first time, and they are like the faces of friends. We know they are not the same; and still we look at them and recall other times. In looking into your faces, I am strongly reminded of Caragli."

"Caragli!" exclaimed Claude, as if he had not rightly understood.

"Caragli! Yes. You may have heard, perhaps, of the seigneurs of Solaro. They were defenders of the church in Caragli; and they suffered the loss of their estates. I knew them in my young days; and one of them I heard from not long since.'

"Will you tell us, if you please. We are interested in hearing anything in connection with Caragli," said Claude, with great command of himself.

"There were six brothers; this was the fourth, I think, Sebastian. When the Count left Caragli, this brother went to the valley of Lucerna. He was not permitted to live there in peace. One evening, as he was walking before his door, several gentlemen, strangers to him, came out of a small hostelry and accosted him. After some trivial remarks, one of the strangers asked if he was one of the religion?

"'I am,' he answered.

"'Do you believe that Christ is in the host?'

"'No,' was the reply.

"'What a false religion yours is!' exclaimed another of the gentlemen, who until then had been silent.

"'False, sir?' replied Solaro. 'Our religion is true. The Bible is our guide; Jesus Christ is our Saviour; the Holy Spirit is our Comforter. Our creed is very simple; to love God, and to obey him.'

"'But you are not simple,' was said, bitterly. 'You know too well how to spread your vile doctrines. Have a care; the Archbishop has found

you out; doubtless you will hear from him in time.'

"The next day Solaro was arrested and cast into prison," continued the narrator.

The cry of a night bird on the roof startled them. The lads were about to rush to the door; the man drew them back.

"I will see what it is. If they kill me, you will have time to save yourselves."

It was nothing, however. The man returned, and went on with his narrative:

"The third day they brought him a book written by a priest, and intended to overthrow the religion of the evangelists. Then the Bishop caused him to appear before him. The prison was in the Bishop's house—more shame to him. Sitting in his grand apartments, and this noble Christian man loaded with irons. The Bishop pretended to receive him with very great courtesy, and to be ready at once to set him at liberty.

"'Only acknowledge your error, and return to the true church,' he said.

"'I am now in the true church. I cannot renounce my convictions. The Bible is my guide, and I must follow its teachings.'

"'Think of all that your house has suffered. If

you promise to renounce your heresy, I will see that you are re-instated in your possessions.'

"'My inheritance is where you cannot reach it,' was the reply.

"'Do you know what you are saying?' came fiercely. 'Have you no regard for your life?'

"'Jesus says, "He who will save his life shall lose it." I cannot deny him.'

"'Have you nothing that binds you to earth? Yours was once a noble family. Can you be so headstrong as to wantonly lose everything?'

"'Everything, if need be, but Christ,' was the answer.

"'Away with him!' said the Bishop to the guards; and the poor man was immured in his cell until such time as the Bishop might desire his recall."

"It was a severe test," said Claude, who was anxious to learn all that the man knew of the case; and still he was on his guard. It would be of no practical use to make himself known; the journey was still before him; and if, from any cause, suspicion should rest upon them, he did not wish this man to be brought as a witness against them.

"A test! Yes, and God helped him," said the man. "I've stood the test myself, and I've been

helped. If it's ever yours, young man, he'll help you."

"Did the Bishop again call for the prisoner?" was asked.

"The very question I asked. You see I was interested. I knew who he was," returned the man. "The Bishop had him up several times. Once his Secretary brought the prisoner down to the terrace.

"'See you that building that stands by itself?' he asked.

"'I see it.'

"'It is a prison.'

"'Well.'

"'It is thirty years since I came to this palace.'

"'What has that to do with yonder prison?' was questioned.

"'Listen! One day there fell into our hands a heretic. He was said to be of noble birth,' said the officer, dropping his voice.

"'And you released him?' was asked.

"'No.'

"'What then?'

"'He was walled up over there, and a little nourishment was given him through an opening in the wall.'

"'What became of him?'

"'They forgot to give him his nourishment after a time. And now they are making the place ready for another, if he persists in being obstinate.'"

"Is it possible!" groaned Claude.

"To tell the truth, I never had anything take hold of me as this did. You see he was from Caragli," said the man, without seeming to notice any unusual emotion on the part of his listeners.

It was late. The lads were shown into a little chamber under the roof. Weary as they were, they could not sleep, because of the intelligence they had just received, and the terrible suffering that confronted them on every side. They were going on a perilous journey. The Duke of Savoy, while he had seeming power, was, in reality, unable to carry out his merciful designs with regard to the people of the valleys. The good Duchess could only beseech and pray. She could not command.

Clasping each other's hands and thanking God that they were still together, the youths talked of their mother, Octavia, and Evrard. A ray of light crept in through a crevice in the thatched roof, and, looking up, they saw a star.

"God's eye is still keeping watch," Louis said. "God will care for mother, and he will defend us. Do not be troubled. We are safe with him. And,

if we do not succeed with the Duke, and the same severities are meted out to God's children, he will regard our good intent; he will see that we were willing to make the attempt."

With the star still shining upon them through the roof, they slept.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PIUS IV. SENDS A LEGATE TO THE VALLEYS.

THE monks of the Abbey of Pignerol had in their pay a troop of plunderers, whose occupation was to pillage, beat, and kill the poor people, and to bring prisoners to the Abbey, both men and women. Of these, some were cruelly burned alive, and others sent to the galleys, and some few released for a ransom.

The minister of Rioclaret (the valley of the clear stream) was signaled as their next victim. While he was preaching, they came under the guise of simple hearers. Their object was to have the captain of the troops bring his force to the place of worship, and while he sounded his clarion, his emissaries in the audience would rush upon the pastor and drag him away.

The troop attempted this, and was repulsed; the leader, a man of great stature, vigorous and armed with mail, was in danger of losing his life. On account of his rank, however, he was spared; but his nature was base: instead of being grateful, he

was tenfold more bitter. Drawing off his troop, he determined to take vengeance upon the hamlet. Accordingly, before daylight he returned to Rioclaret with a troop more numerous than the former, broke open the doors, attacked the inhabitants, and ravaged the whole hamlet. The people, suddenly wakened from sleep, fled without clothes, without provisions, and without arms, to the mountain peaks, still covered with snow. The enemy pursued them, firing many shots at them with their arquebuses; afterward they came back to the deserted houses, took up their lodgings there, and made themselves comfortable, while those to whom the houses and provisions belonged were suffering from hunger and cold. They even asserted loudly that they would not permit them to return; at least until they should promise to go to mass.

Next day, an aged pastor, recently come from Calabria, made an attempt to visit and encourage the fugitives. The soldiers perceived him, pursued him, seized him, and delivered him to the monks of Pignerol, who caused him to be burned at the stake, with another prisoner from the valley of St. Martin.

Meantime, the Vaudois of Pragela, having learned the unhappy condition of the brethren

of Rioclaret, assembled all their available force and resolved to go to their rescue. Their pastor, named Martin, marched at the head of the troop. From time to time, as they advanced, he flung himself upon his knees, with all his men, and prayed to God to give them the victory. Their prayer was heard. The weather was very gloomy, and it was nightfall when they reached the Rioclaret. The enemy had been apprised of their approach, and had made preparation to meet them; but a terrible storm, such that the Alps themselves seemed to be shaken when it burst upon their peaks, poured its fury upon the mountain at the moment when the action commenced. After an obstinate combat, the soldiers were driven from their position, and pursued into the ravines, where they wandered in darkness, and many of them were lost.

Seeing that they could make nothing against a people determined not to yield one iota of their religious belief and opinions, the seigneurs of Le Perrier, Charles and Boniface Truchet, denounced the poor people as rebels, whose object it was to overthrow the existing government.

Yielding to their perfidious suggestions, the Duke of Savoy authorized them to rebuild the fortifica-

tions of Le Perrier, which had been destroyed, and to burden the Vaudois with compulsory labor.

While these things were taking place in the valley of St. Martin, the Count of Racconis was attempting to bring about like effects in Lucerna. With every appearance of friendliness, he attended the Vaudois church, and listened to the sermon with respectful attention. At the conclusion of the service he expressed a desire to see the proceedings against the Vaudois terminated. Induced by his words, the Vaudois sent to him a particular exposition of their doctrines. A few weeks later he again appeared, and demanded of the syndics and pastors whether opposition would be made to the Duke's causing mass to be sung in their parish.

"The Duke is free to have mass, if he desires it," was the reply.

"Will you attend?"

"No."

"To go to mass is very little," said the Count. "The Duke has heard that you are rebellious and stiff-necked; to go to mass will show him that you are still true and loyal subjects."

"We are true and loyal subjects. We have always obeyed our Prince, and we are ready to lay down our lives for his sake," was the answer.

"Then go to mass," said the Count, curtly.

"To go to mass is a matter of conscience. Much as we respect our Prince, we cannot sacrifice our religious principle. The Duke cannot demand this. He could not trust us, should he come to know that we are unfaithful to our convictions."

"By such obstinacy you expose yourselves to great danger," said the Count.

There was no open act of violence at the time; but all the adversaries of the Vaudois redoubled their insolence towards them. The mercenaries of the Abbey of Pignerol in particular carried on a lawless course of infuriate violence.

At the time when the harvest is reaped in Piedmont, a number of the Vaudois people having gone, according to their custom, to work in the plain as reapers for hire, to earn a little money, they were all made prisoners at different places and times, without their knowing anything one of another. Then followed the harvest time in the mountains. One morning, the people being in their summer huts, heard some arquebuss shots in the direction of St. Germain, and a little after they perceived a troop of plunderers advancing toward them. Shouting to their companions, they formed themselves into two bands of fifty men each, one of which went

higher up, and the other lower down upon the mountain. The latter were the first to come upon the assailing party, who were loaded and encumbered with booty; and they put them to flight, and pursued them to the banks of the Clusone, where the half of them were drowned.

The Count of Racconis, in the meantime, had transmitted to Rome the statement of their doctrines which the Vaudois had given him. As they offered to abandon their doctrines if they were proved to be erroneous, and as they had never ceased to invoke discussion for this intent, it appeared only fair to give them the opportunity. But as this involved a question strictly ecclesiastical, it was necessary to consult the head of the church; and the pontifical decision did not allow of such an innovation.

"I will never permit," said the Pontiff, "that points which have been canonically decided, should be opened to discussion. The dignity of the church requires that every one submit himself to her constitutions, disputing nothing; and the duty of my office is to proceed with all rigor against those who do not choose to be in subjection thereto."

The Pope would only consent to send to the valleys a legate, who might absolve from all their

past crimes those who should become Roman Catholics, and instruct them in their new duties, without controversy; that is to say, without their examining for themselves.

Accordingly, the Governor of Fossane, by name Poussevin, was commissioned to establish in the Vaudois churches certain of the Brethren of Christian Doctrine, under whose influence intellectual servility would soon have brought about that precious submission so necessary to the Church of Rome.

Poussevin repaired to the Castle of Cavour, situated upon a solitary eminence, like a verdant pyramid in the midst of the plain, opposite to the valley of Lucerna. The castle belonged to the Count of Racconis, who was at that time likewise there.

The Vaudois were invited to send representatives thither. They accordingly sent three. On their arrival at Cavour, the Governor acquainted them with his commission, and demanded if they would consent to hear the sermons which he proposed to preach in the valleys.

"Yes," they replied, "if you preach the word of God; but if you preach the human traditions, which bring it to nought—No."

Poussevin did not seem to be offended at this

frankness, and replied that he would preach only the pure gospel.

During this conference, a Vaudois of St. Germain had complained to the Count of Racconis, that the people of Miradol had carried away his cattle, and had promised to return them to him upon payment of one hundred crowns, which he had gathered together with great difficulty.

"And have you sent them this sum?" was asked.

"Yes; but they have kept both the cattle and the money."

"I commend you to Poussevin," said the Count; "he will give you full and prompt justice."

"You are an ill-bred fellow," said Poussevin, in reply to the poor man's request; "and if you had gone to mass, this would never have happened to you. And I can tell you," he added, "that this is only the commencement of what is in store for heretics."

Poussevin had a great reputation for eloquence, and doubtless supposed that his power of oratory, together with the assistance of the secular arm, would procure him the honor of a ready triumph over the consciences of these poor, good-natured Vaudois, who suffered themselves so readily to be imposed upon.

Having announced that he would preach at Cavour, in order to set forth in public the object of his coming among them, he ascended the pulpit of the largest church in town, and said, in substance, that he was about to convict all the Vaudois pastors of heresy; to expel them; and to re-establish the mass in the valleys. The Protestants were not moved. The Roman Catholics, their neighbors and friends, actuated both by religious zeal and by natural affection, strongly urged them to become Romanists, in order to avoid the calamities with which they were threatened.

After this, Poussevin invited the leading men of the Vaudois churches to a conference with him. Spreading before them the official letters, he said:

"Here is the statement of doctrines presented on your part; do you acknowledge it?"

"Certainly," was the reply.

"Then," he continued, "you are bound by this paper to repudiate your errors so soon as they shall be proved to you."

"We again promise it," came briefly.

"If that be the case, I will prove to you that the mass is to be found in the Holy Scriptures. Does not the word 'missa' signify sent?"

"Not exactly."

"Was not the expression, 'Ite missa est,' employed to send away the audience?"

"That is true."

"You see, then, that the mass is to be found in the Holy Scriptures."

The Vaudois respectfully replied, that he had made a mistake as to the word "missa," which was not to be found in the Scriptures with the sense which he had assigned to it; and that, therefore, he could not prove the divine institution of the mass from it; also, that private masses, transubstantiation, the denial of the cup to the laity, and many other things which were in dispute between them, would by no means be justified by such a line of argument.

"You are heretics!" he cried, in frenzy. "I have not come to hold discussions in this way, but to drive you out of the country, as you deserve."

With this, Poussevin retired into the Abbey of Pignerol, from whence he issued an order to the syndics of the several communes, that they must expel the pastors, and provide for the maintenance of the priests.

The syndics sent a negative reply, couched in respectful terms, but absolute.

Such was the situation at the time when Claude

and Louis Solaro volunteered to carry a message to the Duke of Savoy. It was no ordinary undertaking; but, with confidence in the Prince, and faith in God, they felt themselves equal to it.

"If we fail, God will know that we were willing to do what we felt to be right to do," was the motive and the inspiration.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE CAPTURE AND THE ESCAPE.

AS day after day passed, the young travelers comforted themselves with the thought that they had thus far been guided safely; and each morning, with their hymn of praise and thanksgiving, went up a prayer, that a plain path might be opened for them. Thus, shunning that portion of the country where their enemies might be supposed to dwell, they advanced boldly, feeling that God was with them, and would be, even to the end.

On the morning of the day that they had hoped would be the last of their journey, they stopped at a spring that gushed from the base of an overhanging rock, and went rippling away in a thread of a stream that spread into a flat skein, and was lost in the pasture land below. Bathing their faces, and making themselves tidy, in anticipation of the time when they would present themselves before the Duke and Duchess, they failed to see a company of men who were climbing singly, and at length stood before them in full force.

The youths feigned not to be surprised; but at once accosted them as friends. The leader understood, at a glance, that they were far from belonging to the mountains. And after a few questions, which were answered prudently, he said that it would be his duty to detain them as prisoners.

"You are going to Turin," he said. "You desire to enter the service of the Duke of Savoy. He is ill, and does not see strangers."

"We have reason to know that the Duke and the Duchess are looking for us. If you detain us, they will hold you answerable," was said, manfully.

"Tut! tut! how will they know who detained you?" cried the leader.

"Did I not say that we had good reason to know that our arrival is looked for this very evening? If we fail to arrive, it will not be a question to be dropped," answered Claude.

After a short parley with his men, the leader once more turned to the lads.

"It is all plausible. Your business is with the Duke of Savoy. Castrocaro is a friend of the Duke; we are acting under his orders. Doubtless, he will give you safe conduct to Turin, and likewise will explain to the Duke satisfactorily the cause of your detention."

The lads were then separated—one to walk in front, by the side of the leader, and the other to the rear—so that the questions asked each could not be heard by the other; and thus they could be entrapped in their speech, and a seemingly fair accusation could be made against them.

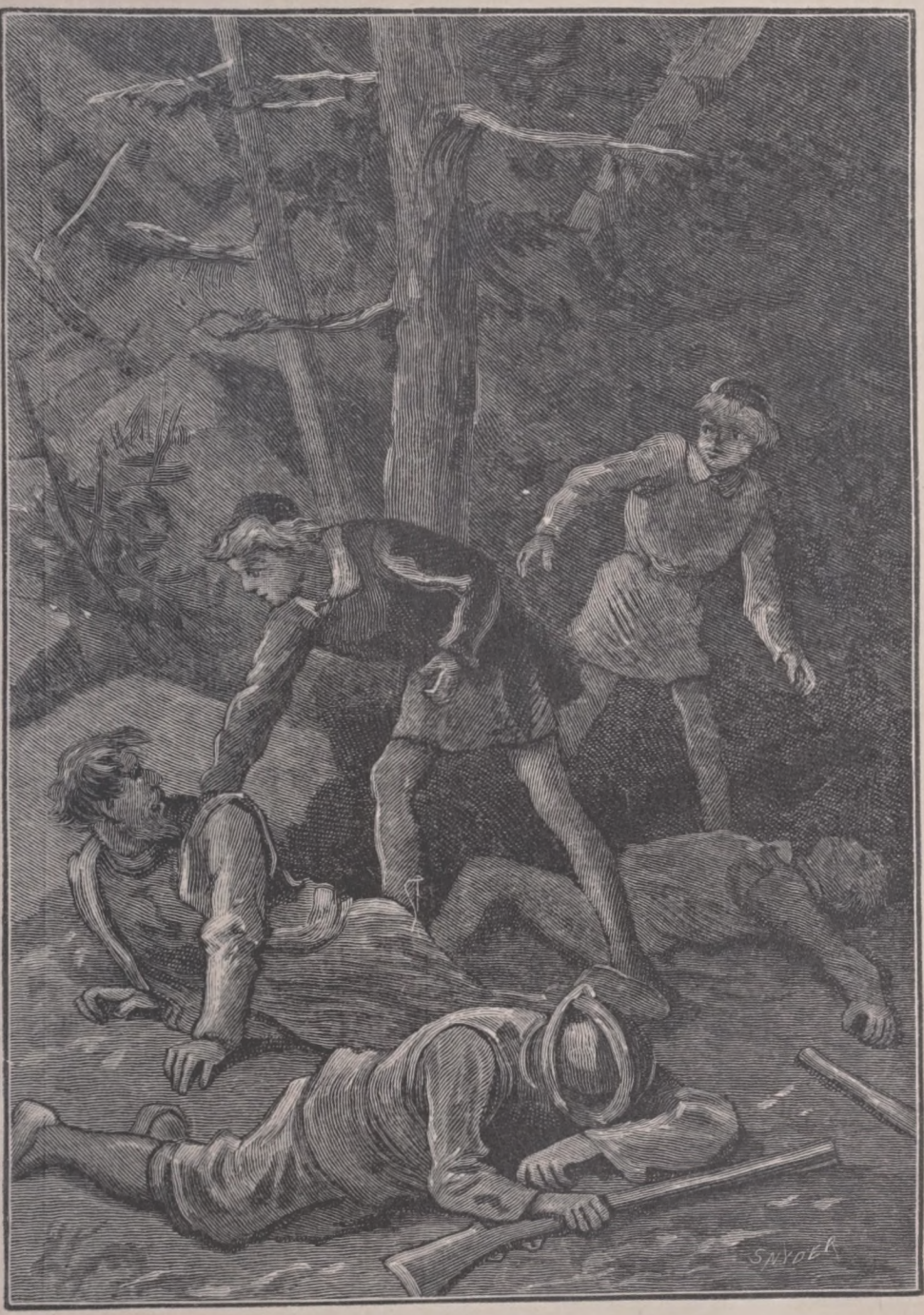
Castrocaro had his castle at La Torre. Notwithstanding the leader made use of the Governor's name, the youths did not imagine that they were to stand before him; doubtless, it was simply a band of marauders, with no other intent than to waylay travelers in the hope of ransom. It was a sore trial; but they walked on, still clinging to the thought that God knew, and that he could and would deliver them, if it was according to his will.

Coming, in the course of the day, to a hamlet composed of a few isolated dwellings, the leader of the troop demanded to be supplied with meat and drink. The inhabitants, despoiling themselves, brought the best they had, and served the soldiers in a close court-yard. This inclosure was bounded on one side by the dwelling house, and on the opposite side by a shed; while on the other sides were walls, in which the entrance gates opened one over against the other. Having gorged themselves, the soldiers closed the gates, seized upon the men, bound

them one to another, and prepared to carry them away prisoners.

The women, seeing themselves hopeless, set fire to the shed, and threatened the authors of all the violence that they would burn them alive, with their victims, if they refused to let them go. The soldiers hesitated, and then opened the gates and escaped, dragging their prisoners with them.

At night they camped in a solitary place. Exhausted, the soldiers slept soundly; not so the prisoners. Under the semblance of sleep, the two youths crept softly together, and after a whispered consultation, decided upon cutting the ropes that held the prisoners, and make their escape. It was a bold movement. If they failed, it would be instant death. Commending themselves to God, they crept cautiously to the first prisoner, and cut his bonds; then to the second, and so on to the end. The men, feeling themselves free, were still cautious. A drunken soldier turned in his sleep, and cried out. Not a movement was made, and again the soldier was asleep, and breathing heavily. Realizing that the time was come, the prisoners, with stealthy movement, gained their feet. The night was dark; not a star to show them the way; neither a ray of light to give the enemy, who were now



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apprised of what was going on, any indication of the direction they had taken. Rushing out, and just wakened from a heavy sleep, many of them lost their foot-hold, and fell into the deep recesses of the mountain paths; and others, mistaking their own number for the fugitives, struck each other down, leaving a bloody spectacle for the morning sun to look upon.

The two youths, from ignorance of the way, could not keep up with the men, who at once made for the hamlet. In all probability they would have died from exposure, had not the women, out of gratitude, instituted a search for them.

"God be praised, that we have found you!" exclaimed the foremost. "It was God who gave you courage to liberate the prisoners, and we have our own again; and it was God who directed us here; and now you must have the best"—giving them to eat, and at last taking them home to the hamlet.

Treating them as their deliverers, and making them as comfortable as their poor means would allow, they questioned what further they could do to serve them.

"We were on our way to Turin, with a message for the Duke of Savoy," was the answer. "We are now turned from our course, and the paths are

unknown to us. If you could direct us to the surest and shortest route, it would oblige us," said Claude, politely.

"That will we do!" came warmly. "You shall have a guide over the most difficult passes. But you need rest; to-morrow will be better than to-day for such a purpose."

That night the inhabitants of the hamlet met together for a public acknowledgment of God's favor in their behalf; calling upon him to strengthen their wavering faith, and by this new exhibition of his protecting care, incline them still more firmly to adhere to his precepts, and to trust him, with the loyalty of those who, having enlisted, are resolved never to falter in their devotion to the Master.

The following morning the guide announced his readiness to depart, and the young men once more set out for Turin.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE DUCHESS OF SAVOY.

THE summer residence of the Duchess of Savoy was removed from the noise and commotion of the city. The palace of the Archbishop could hardly be seen through the forest of trees that stood upon that side of the summer residence. In the park, there were maple trees and elms, spreading their rich foliage by the side of pines and fir trees. On the level meadows stood single lofty oaks and chestnut trees, with their rich growth of foliage to their very tops. Shrubberies of various leaves and flowers presented a refreshing appearance. Artistic arrangement was evident in the whole design.

The paths were well kept; the flowers exhaled sweetness; the birds sang; there were swans and curiously mottled ducks swimming on the lake, and birds of gay plumage standing idly on its banks; in the centre of the lake a fountain threw up a column of water, which splashed down again in fleecy clouds of curling foam.

A clear woodland stream, fringed with juni-

per and filmy willows, and with many a bridge thrown across it, went singing its way to the lake; and, gliding through it, was seen again winding its way to the river, a glimpse of whose silvery surface flashed here and there through the shrubbery.

Under the trees were placed chairs and tables. Ladies, handsomely dressed, were walking up and down the green terraces, or sitting on the balconies. It was a place of enjoyment.

Not far from the castle, and where the eye could take in the beautiful landscape, two youths, distinguished in face and figure, but plainly clad, walked slowly arm in arm. Their talk was low and fragmentary. Occasionally their heads were lifted, and their gaze seemed to go beyond the valley with its woods and fruit trees, to the pointed tops of the lofty mountain range in the distance.

"How different the life we have known!" said one.

"We must not contrast our own lot with the life we see here," returned the other, and apparently the elder. "Strange as it may seem to us that our family must be scattered, it was God's purpose, and for some good to the church of which our father was an able defender."

"It is a comfort to know that God plans, and

that our little lives work out his will. He leads us, and we are here; we are to have an interview with the Duchess. In any event, we have done what we could," was the reply.

The lads walked leisurely; there was no irritation, no feverish anxiety; and this left them free to enjoy the beautiful world in which, for the time being, they had a part.

A distinguished looking man was sitting under the trees, with a book in his hand; but he was not reading. His dress was carefully arranged, and his gaze was fixed on the distant landscape. A lady, with a tall, fine figure, and dark eyes and hair, came out of an arbor, and bowed to the gentleman. Immediately he rose up, and passing under a gothic arch, entered the castle. He was the court physician, Huguet.

With an easy grace, the lady approached the two young men. Her voice was tuned to sweetness, and her smile was full of encouragement.

"The Duchess will be pleased to receive you," she said, at the same time leading the way to a handsome room, luxuriously furnished.

The Duchess bore evidence of being an invalid. She was robed in white, with a border of gold, and she was reclining upon a low couch covered with

blue satin, embroidered with golden lilies. The hangings were of the same, blue and gold. As the youths entered, she raised herself from her pillows, and extended both of her hands. The young lady at once withdrew. They were alone.

"You have suffered—it is easy to see that you have suffered," said the Duchess, in a low voice.

With becoming dignity, Claude, as the elder, gave a brief narration of the grievances that had brought them there; the persecution of the people in the valleys, the suffering from unjust accusation, and the cruel manner in which so many were put to death. "Others," he said, "seek the mountains, and perish from cold and hunger."

"Does the Governor, De Castrocaro, know this?" asked the Duchess, in a compassionate voice.

"It is by his command, your grace."

"Is it possible! He writes to me differently"—at the same time she passed her slender, white hand over her eyes, as if to shut out the dreadful picture.

"Noble minds have difficulty in believing evil; while the baser sort suspect it even when it does not exist," said Claude. "Castrocaro owes his life to one of our pastors. In return, he tortured him."

"How was this?" asked the Duchess, while a slight flush crept into her pallid cheeks.

"Castrocaro was a colonel in the ducal army, and was made a prisoner. He called himself 'a gentleman of the Duchess of Savoy.' The pastor of La Torre, Gilles des Gilles, had him set at liberty; and afterward, when he had the power, he caused the son of that same pastor to be arrested, on the pretext that he had been at Grenoble and at Geneva, with the view of bringing troops from other countries against his sovereign."

"Yes; the Duke was given to understand this," said the Duchess, once more sinking back against the pillows.

"It is possible, your grace did not know that this young man was transported to Turin, to the Jesuit convent, and thence he was despatched to India, whence no word of him ever came."

"No; I did not know this," again rising to a sitting posture, and looking with truthful eyes into the young man's face.

"We were sure of this. We were sure that neither your grace nor your noble husband understood a tithe of the injustice meted out to these poor people by those whom your goodness has placed in authority over them. This feeling upon our part, and the distinguished regard we were taught from our cradle to cherish for your grace,

nerved us with energy to make the journey, and courage to present ourselves before you. Pardon, if we have fatigued you; we feel that you are suffering. And, with your permission, we will take our leave."

"I cannot spare you yet"—while a smile flitted across the worn features. "In listening to your voice, I seem to recall looks and tones long since passed away. You must tell me more of yourselves, and the hopes you have of the future. I must rest now. I will see you again this evening," was said, wearily.

The Duchess touched a jeweled bell, and the same graceful lady entered.

"These young gentlemen are my especial guests. Entertain them, as I would do, did I have the strength," was said, with an air of motherly kindness.

As they made their adieus, the court physician, Huguet, approached the sofa and took the hand of the Duchess in his own. His face was marked with anxiety.

"Is the Duchess so very ill?" Louis ventured to ask, as they left the apartment.

"The Duchess is really very ill. We have grave fears for her," answered their guide.

"God grant that she may long live," gasped Louis. "She is an angel to whom the poor people look, under God, for deliverance."

The court lady led them through carved arches and magnificent galleries to a remote wing of the summer residence. Here a table was spread for a small company. The court lady poured coffee for them, all the while conversing in an easy, graceful manner, that led them to forget that they were strangers. At length she touched upon the valleys and the pastors, one of whom, Scipio Lentulus, she had seen.

"Do you know him?" she asked.

"We have seen him," was the reply.

"A learned man, and as good as he was learned, I was told."

"He shared with the poor people. By act of the Governor, Castrocaro, he was sent to Chiavenna. True, the Duchess had the goodness to rescind the order. If he returned we do not know it," was the answer.

After luncheon, they stepped into a boat, and rowed out to an island in the lake, upon which stood a gothic temple with open porches.

"We have prayers here when the Duchess is able to go out," said the court lady.

Other boats passed them, the occupants bowing and smiling. There was nothing at all sombre; but everything was tuned to a serene cheerfulness. Points of interest followed in rapid succession; and the sun was bridging the lake and flooding the porches of the white chapel when the young men again stood in the presence of the Duchess.

The audience was held in the grand saloon. The Duchess had exchanged her white robe for a crimson velvet gown. The sleeves were slashed, showing a white lining; the front of the dress was embroidered with pearls, and the wide ruff at the neck gave her a stately appearance. Her hair was dressed high with a net work of pearls. Her cheeks were flushed, and she looked less the invalid than she had done in the morning. Her manner was candid, and still she appeared anxious to listen, rather than herself to converse. The discourse, for the most part, consisted in the history of the house of Solaro, the confiscation of their property, the separation of the brothers, and the death of the Count.

"I am aware of it," gasped the Duchess. "You will believe me when I say, that I did all that was in my power to change the decision. I have suffered. I still suffer."

"Do not disquiet yourself, dear lady. We did not come here to speak of our calamities. God permitted it for some wise purpose. In his own time he will make it plain to us."

"But I did what I could. Your mother ——," with a beseeching tenderness in her eyes.

"We do not deny it, your grace. We are aware that it was your influence with your noble husband that led to the postponement of the decree. We have never wavered in our devotion. We are here because of that devotion."

"It was Rome; it is Rome now. The Duke is indignant; it keeps him in a fever of excitement. He has a noble heart, and he sympathizes with the people of the valleys; but there is a limit to his power."

There was no reply. The court physician had warned the young men against anything to cause excitement. After the Duchess had grown calm, she said, very tenderly:

"What hopes have you for the future? Are you expected to return to the valleys?"

"Our mother shares the home of a peasant in the mountains. We have a younger brother, and our father left a sister. We are their protectors," was answered, proudly.

"Alas for Octavia! What a life for the beautiful girl!" exclaimed the Duchess.

"She is a noble Christian woman. She leads the people in religious service, in the absence of the pastors," was the reply.

The audience was soon after at an end. The court lady entered. She was followed by the physician.

"We must beg your grace to rest," he said.

"I have been reminded of other days; it has not hurt me." Still holding her visitors by the hand, she added:

"I thank you for the good opinion you have of me, and be pleased to convey my sincere regard to your mother and to Octavia. This, that you have said to me, I will take to my closet and spread before the altar. If it please God that I find favor, your coming will not be in vain. May his loving kindness be with you to the end."

CHAPTER XXVI.

ON THEIR WAY FROM TURIN.

AS from each sheaf of a great harvest a grain used to be taken to make up the heap which was intended for the altar, so do we but gather a grain here and there destined to a place in the group of Vaudois martyrs.

The seigneurs of Solaro, with their estates confiscated; their women and children, like wild beasts, scouring the recesses of the hills, and the peaks of the mountains, for a habitation; and made to receive, as we have seen, shelter and sustenance from the more hardy mountaineers—were only considered lawful prey, to be tracked down by the paid hordes of Pignerol, or by the command of Castrocaro himself. Not being fortunate enough to possess themselves of the young sons of Count Solaro, as they journeyed over the mountains to Turin, they determined, if possible, to waylay them on their return.

Accordingly, not a day passed without seizing upon some one of the Vaudois fugitives who ven-

tured from his concealment for the purpose of providing food for his children; or one courageous enough to voluntarily carry comfort and cheer to the sick and solitary in caverns.

With hearts full of thanksgiving for the favorable reception they had met with in Turin, the youthful travelers, Claude and Louis Solaro, began their journey homeward, under the safe conduct of the Duchess of Savoy. When the guide reached the pass where he was to leave the young men and return to Turin, he said:

"I will not leave you. I will go with you to these Vaudois valleys, which have preceded our blessed Reformation in the way of salvation."

"The Vaudois have never yet reformed; they are still primitive Christians, witnesses of the apostolic church," answered Claude.

"You increase my impatience to see them. I am resolved to go with you," said the guide.

"We have no home to take you to," ventured Louis. "Our estates were confiscated, and for months our home has been on the ledge of the rocks, and even this is ours only through the kindness of a peasant in the mountains."

"I am of your faith. I will go with you; and I will not be burdensome to any," was the reply.

As they approached the hamlet of Boudrina, they received a mysterious warning, that they would need to be upon their guard. Making their way cautiously, therefore, along the narrow defiles, it soon became manifest that whoever gave them warning had been possessed of good information; for in a gorge of the mountains they were descried by soldiers, who laid hands on them. Carried away as prisoners, the guide was lodged in one place and the two young men in another. In the silence of the night the gleam of what appeared to be a star awoke the brothers from an uneasy sleep; and presently, without noise, a woman entered the room with a covered lamp in her hand. Approaching the pallet on which they were lying, she whispered, softly:

"I know who you are, and I am here to release you. Rise without noise and follow me."

There was command in her look and tone. Still they hesitated. Throwing back the heavy cloth that concealed her features, she gazed into the faces of the youths.

"Ursula! Is it possible?" said Louis, clasping the woman's hand.

"Not a word, or we are lost!" she whispered, freeing herself from his grasp. And once more con-

cealing the lamp under her mantle, she bade them follow her noiselessly. When they reached a place of safety, the woman was the first to speak.

"If their men had been true, I could not have done it. As it was, Anthony went with them to show them over the dangerous passes; but in reality to see that they ate and slept peacefully. We were expecting you, and we knew their purpose. Thank God it is done, and you are not in their hands."

"But will they not distrust Anthony?" Claude asked. "I would not have another suffer in my place."

"Neither would I!" exclaimed Louis.

"Anthony knows the mountains, and he has a good heart. I no longer live in the old place, and I am now thankful for it. We are broken up, and we feel it," answered Ursula.

The guide, Paul Garniér, was liberated also, and came up with them before they reached Boudrina.

"When they learned that you had slipped from their hands, they would have torn me to pieces, had I not shown them my commission, and demanded my release," he said.

"'But you have no business here!' they thundered.

"'I am in the service of the Duke of Savoy;

and I have a right to journey over the mountains and through the valleys as I please,'" was the answer.

"And they released you?" said Louis.

"Yes, they released me; but not without due threatening. I am here, however."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE HEAD FORESTER.

WHILE Octavia Solaro lived under the sheltering care of Andrew Monteil, she was accustomed to climb to the scattered huts, realizing for herself the beauty and grandeur of mountain scenery, and giving to others the sunshine and the cheer of a heart full of faith, and with a burning zeal to do and to suffer all the will of the Lord.

Upon one occasion, she came upon a châlet, the appearance of which was so vastly superior to the others she had seen, that she questioned the advisability of going on. A belt of chestnut trees surrounded the hut. On the right, and sufficiently removed so that the rise of the water in spring time would not harm them, a brook went gliding down the mountain, twisting and curling, and again stretching its silvery length, its banks fringed with grass, thus giving the little plateau a sylvan beauty altogether charming. Hesitating and undecided as to her advance, she perceived, on the ledge well sheltered by the chestnuts, a young girl, idly

watching a woman as she spread a web of linen on the bank of the brook, and then scooped up the water in a gourd, and sprinkled it.

"To pay you for coming, you shall have a portion of it, Margot," said the woman, smiling up to the young girl.

"Nay, nay! Gabrielle, that will not be fair. I came purposely to be with you. I was not thinking of the linen."

"But it will come in well. When a girl marries a man, she should have a supply of linen. It is what my mother said to me; and I did have, and to spare," rung out, merrily.

A pretty flush suffused the young girl's cheeks, and she turned her head in time to see Octavia. It was too late for the latter to run away. Gabrielle dropped her gourd, and good-naturedly stepped forward to receive her visitor.

Octavia's grace of manner did not desert her.

"I have never come in this direction. I had no idea of the châlet and the brook until I was quite here," she said, smilingly.

"The châlet has been here, and so has the brook; but we have not. Thomas, my husband, is head forester. The summer is good for bleaching, and I come for a few weeks. This is the way of it."

The woman was talking, and all the while approaching the young girl on the ledge, whom she introduced as Marguerite Lauris, god-daughter of the old Count of Lucerna.

"Perhaps you are from Boudrina. Gabrielle took me yesterday to a point where I could see the hamlet. It made me dizzy to look up," said the young girl, pleasantly.

"There are heights beyond. I have learned to love the mountains," was Octavia's reply.

Gabrielle smoothed the linen, and scooped up water with her gourd. The sun filtered gold through the chestnut branches upon the heads of the young girls, who were chatting together as though they had known each other for years.

"Does it make you feel solitary to go among the mountains? Do you feel alone, and hardly more than a speck in the universe?" Marguerite asked.

"A speck; a mote; and still a mote swallowed up in God. Is this the idea?"

"I am not sure that I have the right thought of God. I cannot comprehend him; and still in the mountains I feel drawn to him; there is a conscious feeling that his strength covers my weakness."

Octavia's eyes filled with tears. Margot, as Gabrielle called the girl, reminded her of Blanche.

The god-daughter of Count Charles of Lucerna—would it be safe to talk with her of God?

Gabrielle finished watering her linen; then she came and seated herself beside the young girls, under the chestnut trees. They were talking of God and the mountains.

"A strange thing for young girls. What put that into their heads?" she asked herself.

"Octavia has a Bible. You know we were talking of a Bible the other day; we wanted one," Marguerite said, taking the hand of the woman.

"It is not always safe to have a Bible on the shelf. I used to know a good many pages by heart. And psalms—I could repeat a score; but I've forgotten. Strange, how one will forget!"

"You must have had a Bible to learn from. I never had a copy of my own. I heard the pastor Guérin one day. He spoke of things far away from us as being near; of hope, and trust, and comfort when we are in trouble; and of all this coming to us through Christ. It was only once. I have so wanted to know more."

The girl's face was serious, and the dewy softness of her eyes told how deeply she was moved.

Octavia's prudence vanished. She opened her roll and read the simple story of the cross.

"It is beautiful. I believe it. May I believe it?" asked Margot, her face brightening with enthusiasm.

"It is for you to believe. This wonderful love you may take to yourself; and the comfort that comes from it may be yours, to any extent you choose," Octavia replied.

"But are there not conditions?" ventured Margot.

"Only a willingness on your part to accept."

"I have often wondered how it is. I begin to see a little how it is. But to suffer all for Christ. I wonder if I could love with such a love? I have often asked myself this question," continued Margot with deep earnestness in her words.

"It has been so from the beginning; the enemies of Jesus have in all times persecuted and put to death his followers," returned Octavia.

"But if he loves them, why does he suffer it?"—lifting her head and flashing her eyes.

"It is his will, and being his will, we must endure bravely," was Octavia's reply.

Gabrielle sat watching a few goats who occasionally came too near the linen. She had heard everything, and now she said, freely:

"It is better than going to the priest. The priest

is but a man. How can he forgive us? And again, how can he pass sentence upon us? To go to this Christ is a comfort; and for one, I'm inclined to go, only ——," hesitating and dropping her eyes.

"Only what?" asked Octavia, with a gentleness of manner that forced the woman to speak her inmost thought.

"Only this: Could I stand up to it? And if they accused me, and took me away from my Thomas, and threatened to break all my bones, as we so often hear of their doing, could I endure it?"

"If you desire, I will leave the roll with you. Then you can read by yourself. You can think and reflect upon the consequences of such a step," said Octavia.

"That is a true saying. People need time to decide whom they will go with. It was a long time before I knew my own mind when the head forester asked me to be his wife; and I did not know then until a great sorrow came to me."

Gabrielle was one to take a sensible view of things. She had lived in the house of Count Charles, and she knew his hatred of the Vaudois, and that the "shirri" were under his control. It would be a difficult thing for Margot to become a Christian, and for herself it would not be easier.

"We shall be asked, and if we are asked ——," she said, musingly.

While this was passing in the mind of the woman, what looked to be an enormous bundle of fagots came walking up to the door of the hut.

"It is Peter Revel. This is the way he brings our firewood," said the woman, seeing the direction of Octavia's eyes.

"I think I must go now," said the latter. "I shall be missed."

Gabrielle had not even conjectured who her visitor might be. It was evident, however, that she was a Vaudois, and that for the present her home was in Boudrina. It could not always have been.

The sun was hanging like a great gold ball just above the horizon. Waves of color crimsoned the sides of the mountain and rolled away to the valley in flashes of diamond light.

"I will walk with you," said Margot, as Octavia took her leave.

The rare splendor of the setting sun made any form of words seem trivial.

"I am afraid to have you go further, the night is coming on. I know my way quite well now," Octavia felt constrained to say, as they came within sight of Boudrina.

"May I see you again? Will you tell me more of these things?" Margot asked.

"Do you sincerely desire it?"

"I do; and there is no one to whom I can go. It was God who sent you to me. Promise that you will come again," was said, pleadingly.

"If God permits," was the reply.

Octavia sprung along the cliff like a chamois, wondering in her heart why Andrew had never spoken to her of the head forester, and whether Susanna knew Gabrielle; and how they would look upon the visit. She had never been as far away before; and had she been observed by any one, she wondered if it would bring trouble to Andrew and his wife.

Of course, these were serious questions; after all, was it not providential? The Count's god-daughter was anxious to understand the way of life through Christ; and the wife of the head forester was questioning the way. Both were women of more than ordinary intelligence; and, if they became earnest Christians, what an amount of good they might do.

The bundle of walking fagots rolled to the ground, leaving a man with very broad shoulders, and very short limbs, standing there. Lifting his shaggy head, and snapping his little black, bead-

like eyes, he drank in the fresh air and inhaled the dewy sweetness of the fresh young grass, as one to whom the air and sunshine was something to be thankful for. Taking a step forward, he looked after the young girls, walking away like two friends, and approaching Gabrielle, said in a low, confidential tone,

"As I'm alive, she's one of 'em."

"One of them!" ejaculated the woman, stooping and smoothing one corner of the linen still lying on the bank.

"One of the Vaudes that the soldiers takes."

"Hush, Peter, you are always thinking of soldiers. When have you seen any?" was asked.

"Not that I have seen any; but I know what they do."

The woman was still smoothing her linen, and did not make any reply. The woodman looked after the young girls, but could no longer see them; and turning to his fagots, began to pile them in order, one above the other. Then he called up the goats, one after another, and gave them each a crust. It was milking time.

Just a rim of gold was seen on the horizon, as Margot came along the path and crossed the brook on broad stepping-stones placed for that pur-

pose. Higher up, she saw the hut, and Gabrielle's web, like a white fleece, fresh from the washing. Gabrielle was still there. A spicy odor was in the breeze; and a bird came out of the forest, struck a few notes, and disappeared. Margot stood on the last of the stepping-stones, the gold of the sunset caught in the darkness of her hair, and her eyes bright with the joy of a new resolve. Then she jumped to the bank, and, with a smile, held out her hand to Gabrielle. The latter left her linen, and gathered a few clean pebbles from the brook.

"My mother used to say," she began, "that it makes no difference what it is, but in a covenant, something must be given. We have made a covenant, have we not? and the pebbles we will keep as a witness of this day."

Gabrielle's face was serious. She did not even ask if this should be so. It was, upon her part, the seal to a compact that she had already made in her own mind; and she did not doubt but it was the same with Margot. At the same time, the latter took two of the pebbles from the woman's hand.

"A witness of this day," she said, simply; and clasping the woman's hand, they went into the châlet together.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE RE-READING OF AN OLD COMPACT.

THE young sons of Count Solaro returned from Turin encouraged, and able to encourage others. The Duchess had been deceived with regard to the motives of Castrocaro. Exhausted with the cares of state, and subject to severe illness, it might take time; but there was hope. Patience was necessary, and patience was a hard lesson to preach, for the reason that the Governor, at this juncture, was completing the fortress of Miraboco.

The people of Bobi, in particular, saw with displeasure the erection of this fortress, because of the obstacle which it formed on the road to Quieras, the free passage of which was of consequence to their colayers, for the exchange or sale of their produce in Upper Dauphiny.

Castrocaro, upon his part, avowed a particular aversion for the inhabitants of Bobi, and in the name of the priest of La Torre, he demanded that the place of worship, and the grounds attached to the residence of the pastor, should be given up to him.

The Vaudois refused, and he threatened that if this was not done, he would call out the soldiery and take it by force.

"Let them come!" was the reply.

Bobi had suffered previously. The barber, Humbert Artus, had made himself odious to the monks by his offer to discuss with them the doctrines of the church in Greek, Latin, or Hebrew, as they might choose. They made answer that they would consider the subject, and this was the last of it.

The new trouble found the brethren weaker in number, but no less resolute to protect their rights.

Besides, there was a hope that royal power would not be wanting, and thus they met on a verdant hill covered with gigantic chestnuts, in order to make known the sad extremity to which they were reduced; and there, after fervent prayers to God for his counsel and assistance, an enthusiastic resolution was adopted, that they should defend themselves unto death.

In view of all that they had suffered, and all that they might be called upon to suffer, the pastor was required to read the covenant made and acted upon years before, for the encouragement of those who, through manifold sorrows, might feel that further contest was useless.

Standing on the summit of the chestnut-crowned hill, with his silvery locks uncovered to the breeze, and the paper held firmly in his hands, the pastor read, in a deep, sonorous voice:

"In the name of the Vaudois churches of the Alps, we here promise, with our hands upon the Bible, and in the presence of God, that all our valleys will courageously stand by one another in what relates to religion, without prejudice to the obedience due our lawful superiors. We promise to maintain the Bible entire, and without admixture, according to the usage of the Apostolic Church, steadfastly continuing in the holy religion, although it should be at the peril of our lives, in order that we may be able to leave it to our children intact and pure, as we have received it from our fathers. We promise aid and succor to our persecuted brethren, and not to regard individual interest, but the common cause; and not to wait upon men, but upon God."

With one accord, the people fell upon their knees and thanked God that there were still enough left for defence; while a few of the more irresolute could only think of the Treaty of Cavour, renewed as it had been through the Governor's interference, and seeing nothing in the present but suffering and final defeat.

Andrew Monteil had been one of the delegates, and it was on his return that he discovered Ursula driven from her home and despoiled of her goods, thankful for the shelter of the hills, and feeling, as she expressed herself, that the time would soon come when she could say with the Apostle, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to all of them also that love his appearing."

Ursula had taken up her abode with a relation of her husband. It was here that she learned of the peril and probable destruction of Claude and Louis Solaro, on their return from Turin, and the service she was able to do them, as we have seen.

Notwithstanding her sons returned to her, the failing strength of the Countess of Solaro did not revive. For weeks, she had only walked a few yards up and down before the door. The incidents connected with the journey, together with the account of the illness of the Duchess of Savoy, preyed heavily upon her mind.

"Our old friend is going from us," she would say to Octavia, with tears running down her white cheeks.

"The Duchess is our friend. She will do what she can for us. But we have a Friend who is able and willing to do all things for us. Can you not rest here?"

"I do. But when I think of my husband, of our home, and now of my boys," continued the Countess, breaking down and sobbing like a child.

"He knows it all, and he is pitiful. You know how tenderly you love your boys. Jesus loves you with a tenderer love than you give to your children. 'Come unto me,' he says; 'Rest in me.' Our vision is poor and weak; we cannot comprehend, and so we must let him fold us in his loving arms, and rest. He is our Brother, as well as our King."

The good Susanna never seemed to think of the Countess as other than a guest.

"It is a blessing, and many a time I say it in the day. We are none of us above needing help," the good woman said. "Often when the path is too steep for me, and my hands tire under the burden, there's some one dropping the word that strengthens me, and helps me to go on. It was so in my mother's time. She always said that the angels had no abiding place; but were always going out on errands of mercy and kindness."

"Your mother was a wise woman, and you are a

wise woman. The little good that we can do is all that can be set to our credit," Andrew would answer.

"That's the way it is—and it must be," said Susanna, who thoroughly enjoyed a little praise from Andrew. "It's the suffering that makes the help needful. For one, I'm glad that I've got a home and a shelter to give one that's distressed. It's bread that we're sure to get back again."

"That's a true word, Susanna. What we give in this way is like seed planted in good ground. It will come up; the blossom and the fruit will be ours."

It was pleasant to hear these honest souls talk together in the evening. The Countess often had her chair brought into the kitchen for that purpose.

"At first, it was a sacrifice," she admitted to Octavia; "but now I find comfort and self-forgetfulness in intercourse with those around me. I should like not to sadden their existence; but to brighten it. Receiving from them, I would give back in good measure. My vision is clearer on this point."

Blanche had learned to knit.

"This, and the open fire on the hearth, afford me happy hours," she said. "In every house, there

should be a hearth and an altar; fire on the hearth gives bodily comfort, and a fire on the altar gives a glow to the soul that radiates outward. It is the beginning here of what some people call heaven."

Evrard had his duties; and every morning he brought Mina up to show her to his mother.

"She knows us all, and she talks with her eyes. I never used to think that goats could use their eyes in this way."

"We are learning new lessons, my boy," said the Countess, putting her arms around him.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE OLD STORY REPEATED.

THE head forester had been very watchful, and had made a discovery.

"It is all over," he said to his wife. "The wood is growing every day, and it looks well, and I like to breathe the air up here; but the word has gone out"—dropping his head into his open palms and breathing heavily.

"How is it, Thomas, the word has gone out? Just as though the word is not always going out," said Gabrielle.

"But not such a word"—raising himself slowly.

"Speak out, man. I never could unravel—my mother could; but give me the plain knitting."

"True, I'm a free man; I can go, or stay, as I please. But the Count thinks we'd best leave it this year till things are settled a little more."

"What things?"

"You see the churches have got mixed up. There's no telling how it will turn out."

"That's it. I was afraid 'twas something awful,"

answered Gabrielle, trying to check every appearance of emotion.

"The Count is a well meaning man, and he is not for putting people to death for their faith. But the power is not with him, and until it is with him, he must be silent and have the appearance of falling in with the others. And, if he must, then we must, or we'll be suspected. It's bad business, and Margot being Count Charles' god-daughter, won't save her if once she's suspected."

"Margot has never done a bad deed," said Gabrielle, turning pale at the thought of any ill coming to her foster child.

"You thought to keep it quiet, and you have kept it quiet. But yesterday there were some papers found with part of the Gospels written out, and I was asked if I knew the writing, and I could not say I did not. And then the meetings were talked over, and I was warned and all that."

"Well, to be sure! there have been meetings, and your wife has been, as well as Margot. And what right has anybody to say a word, I would like to know? It's all because they know nothing of the Book, and of the sayings that bring comfort to the people, and make them willing to dwell up here with the mountains all around them.

"Hush, Gabrielle! One may think as he likes; but he must not avow his faith."

"I am not ashamed of it."

"No. But if you would enjoy it, you must keep it to yourself."

"But, why should I keep it when I'm not ashamed of it?"

"You are a wise woman, Gabrielle. You know, if you are suspected, you will be accused, and Margot will be accused, and it will be with you, as it is with others—you will be torn from your home; and all because of these Bible-readings."

"I wish we had never come; or that we were never to go away. It will never be again as it has been," answered Gabrielle, no longer in a defiant mood.

The forester began to walk up and down the green shelf on which the châlet stood. Crossing his arms upon his broad breast, his head fell forward, and he walked dejectedly. At length, he dropped his arms and raised his head grandly.

"I am glad that it is mine to be forester and wood inspector. I know all the trees, and have my own thoughts; but with men it is different. There is many a one to take my place, if they can find aught against me."

Gabrielle's heart was touched; she had never seen him so deeply stirred.

At this instant, the figure of a tall, slight girl, stood outlined against the blue sky, then dropped easily down the face of the rock and disappeared.

"Was it Margot?" asked the forester.

"It was Margot."

"And she has gone to the Bible-meeting?"

"I think so."

"Alas! We have fallen upon evil times; other eyes may have observed her. In any event, this must be the last time."

Peter Revel was near; he was always at no great distance from the head forester, and he was wise in his way. This time, however, he was leading a kid by a blue ribbon, and the ribbon was torn and the kid was bleeding.

"It is Margot's kid; and the ribbon she put on with her own hands," stammered Peter, greatly excited.

"Poor thing! It must have fallen from the rocks," said Gabrielle.

"You are a wise woman; but this time I cannot say as much," interrupted Peter. "Look at her poor, bleeding side! and she never did them any harm. But for the ribbon, they would have driven

her away. I caught it, and I told them the kid belonged to the head forester, and, if harm came to it, they would answer for it. 'To whom will you go?' they asked, jeeringly. 'We have the governor at our back. Keep your kid! there is plenty of game in the mountains.'"

"Ah! my poor kid, she must bleat just for joy, when one of them turned and sent an arrow into her side. I could have killed the brute!"

Leaving the head forester and his wife to question Peter Revel still further, we will follow Margot, as she makes her way from point to point of the rocks, and at length enters an aperture screened by vines, and leading into a large and comfortably lighted chamber, where several poorly clad and half starved men and women were seated, and quietly listening, as Octavia Solaro read to them from the Evangelists. Margot took her place by the side of Octavia. Since their first meeting in the forester's châlet, the young girls had been close friends, and the Bible studies in the cavern had been of great profit to Margot.

"I have learned very much here," she would say; "very much of God and his love. How infinitely small the things that I used to think of first importance! 'God so loved us,' crowds out these petty ideas of human greatness and human grandeur."

"Whole nights he passed on the mountains," said another. "Here it was that he seemed nearer to the Father. He could talk with him face to face. I sometimes ask myself if it is not so with us. We are nearer to the Father; there is nothing but God over, around, and beneath us. We are immersed in his glory."

Margot could sing, and songs of deliverance were sung in the cavern; while precious truths gleamed with new beauty, and the cross held up before them inspired them with fresh zeal and an unquenchable faith.

"It makes it easier for us," said a white-haired man, who had been called to give up his possessions and flee to the mountains; "easier for us; for now we know that we have a High Priest that can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. The cruel spear entered his side, and the long spikes pierced his hands and his feet. He suffered as a man; but he died as a God."

From such communing the people went forth one by one, with silent voices and muffled footsteps, leaving Octavia and Margot to come still closer together. Lifting the green veil that fell over the mouth of the cavern, the two girls stood gazing over the valley.

"When the head forester goes home, I am to go with him, and it can never be again just as it has been," Margot said, as she looked into the face of her friend. "Do you remember, Octavia, when you told me the story of the ten talents?"

"I remember," was said, sweetly.

"I have sought my own pleasure, without a thought of my responsibility. I must do something for Christ. I cannot be satisfied to stand before him without one sheaf that I have gathered."

"Love for Christ demands sacrifice," whispered Octavia.

"Christ sacrificed himself. I love him. Love demands sacrifice, and a sacrifice made for love is robbed of its sting," was the reply.

White clouds floated like castles in the air; vast ledges of rock went shelving down to the valley.

"We cannot see the paths; but they are there," said Octavia. "The way opens as we advance. Thus in life we move forward. We cannot see the path. God will lead us. It is but a step at a time."

The châlet could not be seen; but they knew the place by the purple coil rising and spreading itself, and at length lost in the pure atmosphere.

"It is the smoke signal," exclaimed Margot. "The head forester has come in."

CHAPTER XXX.

PETER REVEL'S CHARGE.

WHEN the head forester left the châlet, he called Peter Revel to him in a confidential way, and told him that Castrocaro's men were on the watch for fugitives.

"It is not so much zeal for religion as it is the hope of a reward. If you happen to know of any Vaudois who have been deprived of their estates, you will do them a service by keeping a keen look-out, and giving them warning in time," was said.

Peter's eyes snapped. Whatever intelligence he might, or might not, have he always comprehended all that the head forester had to say.

"They have been so long in the wood together, that there is but the one thought between them," Gabrielle said.

In any event, Peter understood the precise fugitives Thomas was thinking about, and he answered stoutly:

"I am here, and I am to stay here. I know the wood, and I know an eagle's nest when I see it."

Gabrielle said it was a long speech for Peter to make; but she liked it. After all, what did he know about an eagle's nest?

Margot gave him her kid, with the blue ribbon around its neck. It was not quite well of the wound, and it was very shy, and would not go a step from the fold.

"I will keep the blue ribbon, and I will hold to my own, if the Archbishop himself should come," replied the little man.

Gabrielle smiled.

"He knows what to say, and he can say it. Who would have thought it of our Peter?" she said, softly, to her husband.

Many of the families that had previously been driven from Boudrina returned; but so poor and miserable, so utterly broken by wounds, that their condition seemed little better than that of the fugitives who had no other shelter than the caverns in the mountains.

Andrew Monteil and the good Susanna welcomed them gladly; and not only welcomed them, but spent entire days in patching up the huts that the soldiers had beaten down, and making them comfortable.

"It is right," Andrew would say, when one of

the unfortunates expressed gratitude; "'by love serve one another,' is the command."

Andrew was a brave man, and he had learned much of the Bible since he took the exiles into his house.

"It is like having a pastor in our own dwelling," he would say to Susanna, as the latter went about repeating one of Octavia's sayings.

"That is a true word. And when the poor people get settled again, we will have worship, and there will be reading and singing and praising God," was the reply.

Andrew, too, was looking forward. He anticipated the time when the hamlet would put on its old prosperous look, and the people would be able to cultivate their small fields, and lead their flocks to the sunny slopes in safety.

Until this was done, however, Andrew Monteil's house was open for such as could venture to come at night and sit in the darkness. It would not do to light a torch, and the beasts on which the sick and crippled were placed had their feet bandaged, so that the muffled tread in the mountain passes might not be heard. It was a coming together, with the expectation of meeting the Master.

"He does not say that he will give us an abund-

ance of this world's goods," said one who had been racked by his tormentors, and was still firm. "We are inheritors with him of poverty, suffering, and death. 'For I will show him,' was said in reference to Paul, 'how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.'"

Peter Revel, the woodman, came; not so much to listen as to speak a word with Octavia. Once he surprised her by asking after Claude and Louis Solaro.

"Would it not be well for them to come to the head forester's house? If questions should be asked, they could then say, that they had taken service. Would it not be safer?"

Peter was proud to show that he had charge of the forest, in the head forester's absence. He knew the wood and he knew good carving.

"The day will come when it will sell for a good price," he said.

The larches and pines were his delight, and if he found a flower, it was sure to pass into Octavia's hand.

"It is God's way of speaking," he said. "So he opens the windows of heaven and drops them, just to let us know that he's thinking about us."

As the days passed, Claude and Louis grew

thoughtful. The good Duchess would certainly interfere; they had her word; and still depredations were going on. Peter had seen these young men, and he called them eagles.

Under pretext of bringing wood for carving, the man came frequently to see the young men. He was anxious and disturbed, and often his words were unintelligible.

"I wish I could do things, and every time I see you it comes to me," he would begin; and then suddenly fly out to the wood and the carving, leaving Octavia to conjecture that it was the desire to carve objects accurately that troubled him.

With the lads he went further.

"I wish I could take you to Geneva; but I can't," he said one day. "Do you think it would be possible for you to go?" he asked, glancing into their faces with his bright eyes.

"Do you want to be rid of us?" said Louis, laughing.

"It's not that"—shaking his head wisely—"but Geneva, I hear tell, is a safer place for them of the religion."

"Possibly it is, Peter. Yes, it is; but you are here to care for the wood when the head forester is away. And we have our mother and brother and

Octavia," returned Claude, catching the woodman's thought and honoring him for it.

"I might have known as much, and I can't say but I'd do it myself in your place; and now, if worst comes we'll be together."

It gave the man delight to find that he was understood. He had tried to tell Octavia; better, to go straight to the lads, as he had done; they were sensible young fellows. And now they were woodmen, and he was in some sense their protector.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE YOUNG WOOD INSPECTORS.

PETER was accustomed to be up with the first light.

"I know not how it is," he said. "Something calls me. Everywhere in the wood, there are voices calling one to another, and they call to me, and the thing is done; and when I lie down at night, there is something more in the world than there was at daybreak."

"I know of a shorter path to the wood, and I am to show you," he said to Octavia one evening, as he brought some white, satin-like birch for carving. "And now I shall be glad if you will teach me to carve a goat with twisted horns," he added.

"We will work together, and you will soon do it," was the reply.

Peter had a knife, and he had known something of carving.

"That is the way I come by the knife," he said. "It was given me by a man who spent a day with the head forester. He carved his name on one of

the trees, and I tried to cut mine with a sharp stone. He gave me the knife. The name is there still; I will show it to you some day."

The return of the families and the rebuilding of the hamlet, took much of Andrew's time. Blanche and Evrard gave more of their time to the vintage. There were cordials to make for the sick people.

"And to have is to give, and to give calls for work," Susanna said.

Octavia had found another industry besides carving. One of the women had managed to hide away some fine flax, and she had a wheel; and she held the distaff in her hand. One day, she allowed Octavia to try, and now she had a skein of her own.

"The mother hung her skeins there, on the rafter," Susanna said. "If you like, you shall have the same nail, and there it will hang; and every one will see that a web will come in time. And the bleaching will be just the nicest thing."

Susanna had the happiness to anticipate; whereever she was she could be thinking of something still better beyond. This happy disposition was not hers by nature; it was a gift.

"My mother has often said to me, that when I was in the cradle I cried not a little, and that things went wrong with me. I was one day crying, and

my mother was at work and could not stop to pacify me, when all at once a blow was struck on the door, and a poor man entered and asked for bread. Now, the bread had all been eaten; but there was something in his look that went straight to my mother's heart, and she said to him that she would make some. She had the meal and the fire. And while it was baking, the man lifted me out of the cradle, and stilled my crying. Then he asked my mother what gift she would like best for the child; and she said to him, that she would like me to be always sweet and good, and always to have something before me bright-like to help me on. And it was so; and it's been so. It was the bread given a stranger that brought the gift."

Octavia thanked Susanna for telling her such a beautiful story. She could not doubt that a blessing would always come in this way.

"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Peter widened the road, and then came to show Octavia how much nearer it was; "and quite as safe," he added. Passing a hut that had once been occupied, he said:

"It is just like lighting a fire, to rebuild the

hamlet. The flame doesn't flash up at once; but when it gets well to going, then it is seen. Let the people come in and begin to live again, and the priests will see it, and the Governor will hear of it, and it will be as it was, only worse."

Peter was in trouble, and Octavia questioned. The Duchess of Savoy was really ill. What if she had grown worse, and had given the business over to the Duke, and he, as usual, had been persuaded that interference was unnecessary, nay, positively hurtful?

The Countess could not sleep at night, and in the daytime she was more active than usual. Her sons were growing taller and older, and a line of brown hair was showing on Claude's lip. There was a look of his father in the youth's face, and it struck her to the heart as she gazed upon him, and conjectured what there might be in store for him.

To encourage their mother, the noble-hearted lads rehearsed all the incidents in their visit to the Duchess, describing her manner and dress, and all the small kindnesses they had received, dwelling long upon the early memories she brought up, and always ending by a firm reliance upon her word.

"It requires time to examine into state affairs;

we must wait." And for the time the Countess was comforted.

"We must wait," was the echo.

Margot's goat was now well, and showed no sign of the savage stroke she had received. On the day that Claude and Louis went over to the head forester's châlet, Peter brought the goat to Octavia. Only the blue ribbon he carried in his pocket, taking it out quite stealthily, and giving it into her hand.

"It was Margot's wish that you should have the goat," he said, "and I have brought it. It is always well when one goes out of the house, for a present to be made the house that very day. And the goat is a present that will bring good, and good thoughts will follow it."

The Countess, leaning on Blanche's arm, came out to see the blue ribbon fastened around the slender throat; and Evrard made a wreath of bright-colored leaves, and dropped it over the head, letting it rest on the plump shoulders.

"It is like a sacrifice," Susanna said; "and where there is sacrifice there is love. Yes, indeed, the goat stands for a loving thought, and it will stand so."

Evrard led the goat away to where Mina was

bleating, and the young men, Claude and Louis, walked away with Peter to the forester's châlet.

From that day there was a want felt in the hut, a reaching out after something that had slipped from their grasp.

"A strange thing, and it is so," Susanna said to her husband. "Here am I crying out for the sons of another woman. And I am as proud of them as I would be of my own."

The Countess talked of the time when her boys were babies, and she a happy mother.

"And now you are over the road, and beyond. How much more the love of a man for his mother than the love of the helpless infant, sweet as that is!" said Susanna, with shining eyes.

Blanche took occasion, when the Countess and Susanna were talking, to gather the children in the hamlet and teach them short Scriptural lessons suited to their understanding. The solitude of the mountains had taught Blanche lessons of patient sweetness. With her old props torn away, the tendrils of her love had taken root at the foot of the cross, and the blossoms of blended faith and trust twined about it in perennial beauty.

Andrew could use a saw and a hammer as easily as a bird uses her wings. He was hewing wood and

making a room that would be worthy of public service on the Lord's Day.

"Many's the time I think what a man Andrew would be had he the chance of others; but he's always stood for himself, and he is brave. He will do what he thinks to be right, and for this I am proud of him," Susanna said, as she examined the beams and the rafters. "Yes, and he'll have good seats too."

Blanche came to the new building with a company of children; their hands were filled with dainty Alpine flowers, faintly colored, but fragrant. With one accord, they emptied them into the lap of the Countess.

"I have a cup," Susanna said. "It was my mother's. I will put the flowers in the cup; they can stand on your table, and you will be thinking of the children, and the children will be thinking of you. It is a good thing to have the love of children."

Peter was careful that the young wood inspectors were not too tired for a walk at night.

"It is a beautiful thing to say, 'mother.' I used to say 'mother,' and I am glad to think that I never was unkind and deceiving in my ways. And now, could I only say 'mother,' and feel her mild eyes upon me, just as she looked when I was a boy, and

the touch of her hand on my forehead, it would be like new life in my veins. But, no, it is not for me to say 'mother.' As long as you can, say 'mother' every day, and when the time comes that you can say it no longer, you will not be sorry that you said it. No man is ever sorry that he was good to his mother."

The moonlight nights were full of beauty. Busy as they were during the day, they still did not venture a light at night.

"When a man works through the day, he needs sleep, and sleep is better with only the night and the stars," Andrew said.

CHAPTER XXXII.

BRAVE DEFENCE OF THE PASS.

EVRARD went out with the goats each day. The goat with the blue ribbon was the last to leave the fold. Mina always waited for Evrard to untie the ribbon; this was done at the door of the hut, with the Countess looking at them.

"Mina knows you, mother," said the young shepherd, as he dropped on one knee, and flung his right arm around the neck of Margot's goat. "You will keep the ribbon, mother, and to-night we will put it on again," handing it up to her. Just look at her eyes; the expression is almost human. She understands; only her speech is not like ours," continued the lad.

Evrard was tall, but slight. He could not endure fatigue like his brothers. With humid eyes the mother gazed after him.

"You must not be lonely to-day, mother, and to-night we will be together again," rings out.

Evrard has a heart to comfort his mother. Blanche is not far away. She is never far away

when Evrard leads the goats to the sunny openings. The Countess takes her arm, and together they walk along the path. Mina leads the small flock, and Evrard walks behind. He carries a stout staff, and his eyes are swift to see danger.

"I suppose I should not feel so, but every time my boys leave me I ask myself, 'Will they come back to me?'"

"This is because you have suffered," said Blanche, pointing away to the breaking clouds.

It was beautiful. A golden glow swept over the valley, and the mountain peaks were bright and glistening.

Susanna came out of the hut.

"It is a good day," she said. "It is always good when the mist rolls up, as if pushed gently, instead of being torn by the wind. A good day, and the chestnuts are ready to gather."

Susanna had her pans on the long bench, and she began to rub them vigorously. The Countess was still looking away to the mountains. Octavia had said in the morning, "I must see the poor people to-day." And she was gone.

Susanna finished her pans and hung them in the sun. The Countess remarked that they looked like so many shields.

A company of children came up the hard path that led to the hut door.

"I had quite forgotten it," said Blanche, as she caught sight of their bright, upturned faces. "I promised to go nutting with them."

The Countess asked if she would be gone long.

"The trees are quite near. We will return soon. But a basket. I must have a basket," said Blanche, laughing.

Susanna was in high spirits; she wished she could go; but they could not all go.

The hours of the day passed swiftly, very swiftly.

"It was morning, and now it is night, and the work is done," Susanna said.

The chestnut gatherers brought full baskets. The children insisted upon taking home only the half of what each had gathered.

"It is for the Countess. She could not go with us," they said.

The Countess came from her room and gave each of them her hand. Again they courtesied, and went down the path with their baskets in their hands. In a short time Andrew came in, thoroughly weary. Evrard and the goats had not yet come. It was something new for the lad to be out when Andrew

came. The time for the evening meal came, and it was eaten in silence. A sudden gloom had fallen over the house.

"One of the goats may have fallen over the rocks, and the child is unable to rescue it. I must go and see. I know the dangerous passes," Octavia said.

"It is that brought me here," said a voice out of the shed where the goats were wont to be folded. "I am come to see if everything is straight."

It was Peter Revel. Andrew was already gone.

"Something more than usual," said Susanna. Careful so to speak, that the Countess should not hear her.

Claude and Louis were at the door, in close conversation with Octavia.

"We have just heard," they said, "that the Governor has sent men to arrest Andrew Monteil, as one who has given succor to the fugitives; and not only this; but he is rebuilding the hamlet, and dispersed families are returning, and he means to have a church and a pastor. He is a pestilent fellow, it is said."

"It is so. The building has been begun, and for this good deed he is to be arrested. Does Andrew know anything of this?" asked Octavia, sending a

furtive glance into the room where Susanna was hushing her babies to sleep. "He has already gone to find Evrard. Both will be taken, I fear."

"We are to gather the men and make what defence we can, and may God protect us," answered Claude.

Peter was beside himself when he learned that the goats had not come in, and that Andrew was already gone out after them.

"The soldiers, doubtless, have found them, and we have no time to lose," he said to Claude.

It was so; the flock had been driven away, and Evrard was lying with a bullet through his heart when Andrew found him. The hamlet was soon astir. Before morning, doubtless, an attack would be made. Gathering the more defenceless into the strongest hut, men and women prepared for the onset.

"We are in the hands of our enemies," said Andrew Monteil, as he returned, bearing the cold, stiff form of the lad in his arms. Falling upon his knees in the midst of the smitten crowd, he invoked divine strength with such filial confidence, that each heart was strengthened, and each arm was energized.

The soldiers, who had intended to surprise the hamlet in the night, were themselves surprised to

find the handful of fugitives prepared to receive them. As the armed force was seen, by the light of the stars flashing across their spears, six determined men posted themselves in a defile, where only two persons could pass abreast. There they held in check that long file of the enemy, who crowded up to the barrier in the vain hope of forcing an entrance.

Of these six Vaudois, the two foremost had their pieces always charged; and being within easy range, killed each couple of soldiers who presented themselves at the turning of the rock. The two Vaudois placed in the second rank, fired over the shoulders of the first, their comrades behind them reloading their pieces. The other Vaudois, mounted upon the higher ledges, in the depth of which the ranks of the enemy's line were involved. Then, from the highest peaks, rough rocks were loosened, which broke through the line, destroying the men, making gaps in the ranks, and bursting like thunderbolts, spreading in multiplied fragments like grape shot, and rebounding, like splinters of bomb shells, between the contracted walls of that path of death.

Unable to advance, or to spread abroad; unable even to fight, the troops retreated in disorder. It was a horrible situation to ascend a ravine in which

huge rocks were rolling down with fearful noise and power of rapid destruction; and thus the assailing party withdrew, shattered and mangled, and for the time powerless.

It was a victory that was not to bring peace, however. Fresh men were brought, and the attack was made from an opposite quarter. The Vaudois had only taken time to thank God for his support, and to implore him still to be with them, when the onset was made. Inflamed by opposition and urged on by their leader, they advanced with the battle cry: "Death to the Vaudois!"

The shock was terrific. The Vaudois in turn fell back, with their leader dangerously wounded. Claude and Louis Solaro covered the retreat. Peter Revel, with the devotion of one who spared not himself, led the women to a place of seeming security. Feeble as the Countess was, she could not keep up. Blanche was supporting her and urging her forward, when a soldier made an attempt to seize Blanche, and at the same discharging his weapon, the contents passing through the temples of the Countess, killing her instantly. Seeing that she was in his power, Blanche sprung forward and flung herself from the precipice. Death was preferable to dishonor.

By this time, the inhabitants of the surrounding districts, victims as well of the spoliations of the hostile army, came to the help of the brethren of Boudrina. Thus encouraged, the people again gathered, and the soldiers were put to flight, leaving their dead and dying to mark their retreat.

It was a sad occasion, when the Vaudois gathered to return God thanks. Andrew Monteil was there; but pale and gasping.

"Thank him, Claude," was faintly whispered.

Octavia bound up her torn and bleeding hands, and everywhere was seen aiding others.

It was not a time to read God's meaning in all this; it was only for them to do, and to keep doing; the issue was with him. It was a sad spectacle as they gathered up their dead.

"Dear mother! It is a comfort to know that it was a quick death."

More bitter were the tears as Blanche's broken body was borne tenderly in the arms of Peter Revel.

"The suffering of that one moment, and the fearful leap!" stammered Claude.

It was subsequently found that Castrocaro, irritated at the order he had received from the Duke of Savoy, had instigated the second attack upon

Boudrina, for no other reason than that he had pronounced it rebellious, and asked particularly, that authority might be given him to destroy it utterly. A contrary order had been issued, however, according to the last expressed desire of the expiring Duchess, that the people be spared further outrage, and safe conduct be given the remaining members of Count Solaro's family, in order that they might reach Geneva.

The Governor, seeing that his power was at an end, determined to have it appear that he had not received the order. Furthermore, he proclaimed that a fresh army was coming to destroy the Vaudois. The Duke, softened by the grief he felt on the death of the Duchess, sent a commissioner to the spot, who reported that the Vaudois people were greatly wronged by their calumniators.

"The cruel Castrocaro," he said, "cares for nothing but to live in luxury in his castle at La Torre, where he has become fat and rich, leaving his garrison to commit all sort of excesses, and himself commanding them to do as they did at Boudrina. He keeps in his palace, a troop of dogs of prodigious size, and very fierce. His son Andrew is a dissolute fellow, and his three daughters go indiscriminately to mass, or to the

preaching of the reformed ministers; caring nothing for the one religion or the other; but only to be extravagantly and gaudily dressed; while his great object is to plunder all he can."

The Duke of Savoy, being informed of such conduct, resolved to put an end to these excesses. He summoned Castrocaro to Turin; but upon various pretexts the unworthy Governor refused to obey, giving still further proofs of his unworthiness by his resistance. The Duke, seeing well enough that if there were rebels at La Torre, it was not among the Vaudois, ordered the Count of Lucerna to seize Castrocaro, and make him prisoner. This was no easy matter. His desperation made him bold to defend himself as long as possible.

Treachery came to the aid of tactics. A captain, upon a private agreement with the Count of Lucerna, sent away a part of the garrison. The Count had posted his men within a short distance of the castle. He came on impetuously, and surprised it almost without defence. The porter was killed at the moment when he was going to raise the drawbridge. Castrocaro and his son were in bed; and only the huge dogs to defend them. The Governor's three daughters mounted to the belfry of the castle and sounded the alarm. The people

heard; but they made no attempt to oppose the Count. Castrocaro was conducted to Turin, and died in prison. His son expiated his misconduct in the dungeons of the senate. All their goods were confiscated, with the reservation of a small allowance, which was secured to the daughters and their mother.

The news of the death of the Duchess of Savoy, allied as it was with the clemency of the Duke, was followed by a day of prayer and fasting on the part of the Vaudois. In Boudrina, service was held in the new building. Andrew Monteil was brought in on a cot. Susanna held up his left hand, while he prayed for the Duke and the people.

Peter Revel was there, with the head forester and Gabrielle. The latter was proud to say that she had stood up for the right, and so had Margot; and harm had not come to them. They were there to say good-bye to Octavia and the young men.

"It is a long journey to Geneva; but the hand of God is in it," Susanna said, with visible emotion.

"Geneva is the place for them," stammered Peter. "It's what I've been wanting, and now it's come to pass. Things come to pass when we wait for them."

Octavia's good-bye was a prayer. Andrew asked to be raised to a sitting posture.

"Give me your hands," he said to the weeping group. "Come nearer; let me look into your faces for the last time. You have taught me much. I am grateful. God grant we meet there"—his voice faltered and was gone.

"In heaven we'll all praise him," said Susanna, catching the whispered words.

A smile illumined the face of the wounded man. And this was the parting.

The journey to Geneva was full of hardships. For months after they arrived there, Octavia hovered on the brink of the grave. But she recovered; and we are told that it was still her meat and drink to do good. The young men, Claude and Louis, studied for the ministry, and afterward we hear of them as doing good work in the valleys.

The Duke of Savoy did not long survive his wife. He died August 30, 1580.

THE END.

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